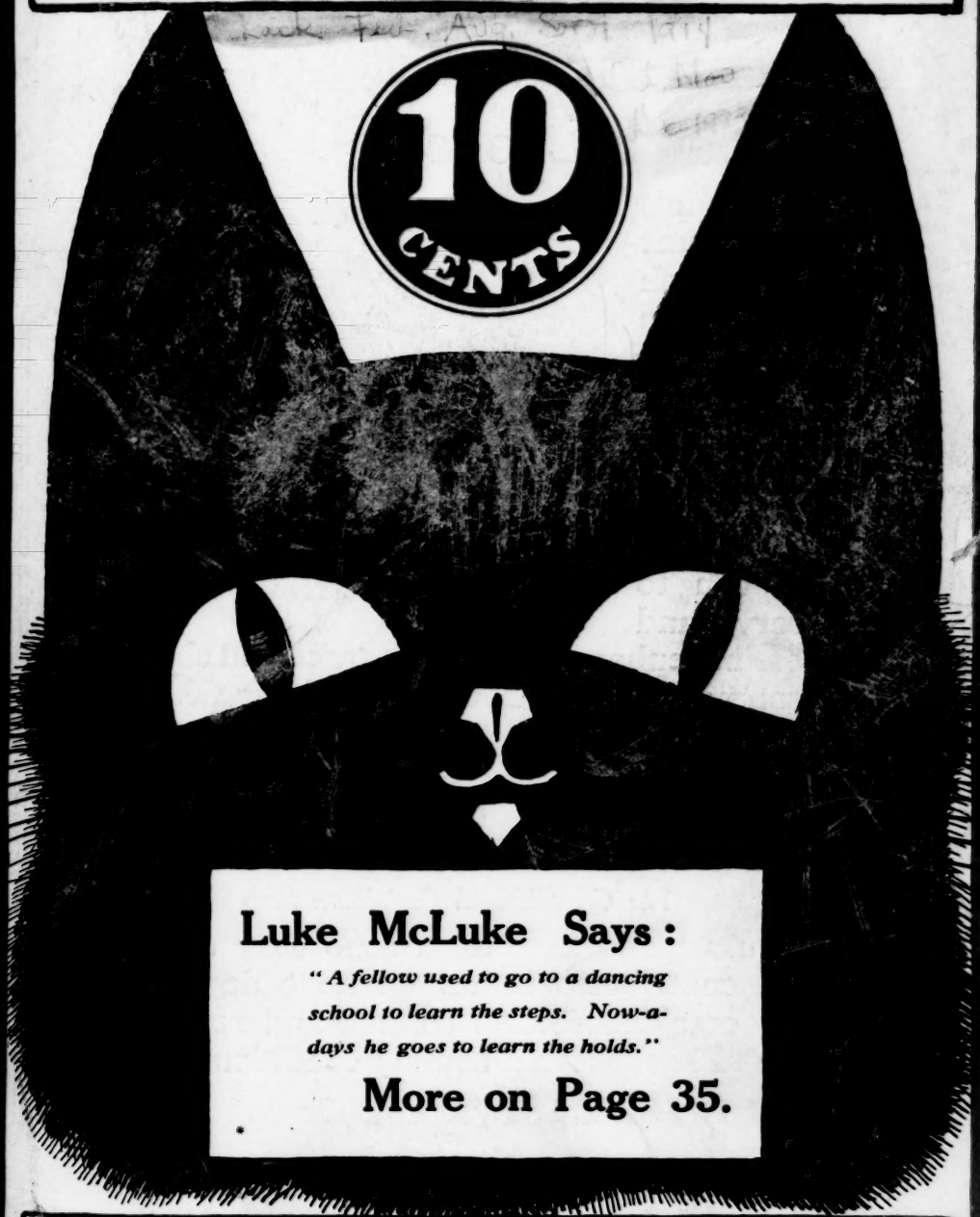
The Black Cat



Luke McLuke Says:

"A fellow used to go to a dancing school to learn the steps. Now-a-days he goes to learn the holds."

More on Page 35.

JANUARY 1914

Woman's Looks

A woman's looks count for so much more than a man's in the sum of life, that she owes it to herself to do all that she reasonably can to preserve, and if possible enhance, whatever grace and charm of person nature may have endowed her with.

To this end—

Pears' Soap

The Great English Complexion Soap

the purest and best toilet soap ever manufactured contributes in an eminent degree. Its dainty emollient action softens and refines the skin and keeps it in a healthy condition.

It is Matchless for the Complexion

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OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST

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JANUARY, 1914

$1.00 a YEAR

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OFFICE PURRS

THE BLACK CAT is devoted to original, unusual, fascinating stories—every number is complete in itself. It publishes no serials, translations, borrowings, or stealings. It pays nothing for the name or reputation of a writer, but the highest price on record for *stories that are stories*, and it pays not by length, but by strength. Manuscripts should be addressed to Editorial Dept., The Black Cat, Salem, Mass., and must be accompanied by addressed and stamped envelope for return if unavailable. All MSS. are received and returned at their writers' risk.

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Something about Black Cat Stories

We have some well defined ideas of the kind of stories you want. We hold no admiration for the successfully marketed sex stories that have disgraced the pages of some of our big "respectable" magazines. We are not making a magazine for children, neither are we editing a magazine for the prurient minded. Some few folks still believe Hawthorne's masterpiece, "The Scarlet Letter," immoral. They are impossible. As a class they are as abnormal as the devotees of "sex o'clock" fiction.

Plastered all over the walls of the editorial rooms of the "N. Y. World," burning itself into the young brains of the "cubs," is the passion of Joseph Pulitzer, its founder, expressed in the single word, *Accuracy*. We would recommend a similar sign in the editorial rooms of some magazines we know, and the word would be *Sincerity*. Sincerity in editorial judgement would "kill" the immoral story and accept a "Scarlet Letter." All the wail of the "sex o'clock" publishers about the Puritan conscience is "bunk." It's the "counting-room" soul and not the Puritan conscience that is at fault, and let us whisper—*they know it!*

The other day a writer asked us what kind of stories we wanted. We replied, "interesting stories." It's a source of considerable pride to us to know that our readers do not demand the silly "happy ending" in all their stories. It is also a guarantee that in the pages of The Black Cat you will find *real* fiction. Can you imagine "Romeo and Juliet" with the conventional last-chapter ending? It is no exaggeration to say that the happy-ending demand of the average editor has kept a lot of good stories out of our magazines. As one of our writers remarked in the December number, "The Almighty would not make an altogether successful editor." Few of us have to travel far, before we learn that not every experience in life has a happy-ending finish.

It is very plain that if we insist on "they married and lived happily ever afterward," for all our stories, we are going to miss some good ones. But the evil does not end there. It strikes at the fount of inspiration. Writers capable of writing real fiction are forced to grind out mawkish, silly stuff. Here, we think, lies the greatest danger. No Edgar Allan Poes can possibly live in the "hot house" of happy endings. To repeat, we are happy to know our audience grew out of happy endings when they "grew up."

Fortunately, as in life, many good stories do end well, and we will have them. It is no editorial secret that The Black Cat holds a peculiar charm and appeal to fiction writers. The Black Cat is the Alma Mater of hundreds of successful authors. In this respect we are very fortunate. This bond of good will is of immeasurable help to us in securing for you the kind of fiction you want.

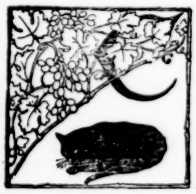
The Black Cat

VOL. XIX JANUARY, 1914 No 4

The Eyes of the Unworthy

BY HOWARD MARKLE HOKE

A young man gives his intended bride a diamond engagement ring with an Oriental history. If one of the pair is unworthy the diamond turns yellow but only the perfect in heart can see the change of hue. It nearly wrecks two lives until both come to realize a fundamental truth in life, which you will learn when you have read this uncommonly good story.



ROMELIN held up a small case covered with black leather and snapped the lid open. Face aglow and fingers trembling with eagerness, Catharine slipped a ring from its recess in the sable velvet cushion.

"How odd, Reeder!" she cried.

"An unusual ring for an unusual girl!" he responded proudly.

The pattern and the workmanship were indeed unusual. A bright and dull strip of gold, curiously interlaced, ended at the back of the ring in a heart-shaped binder that was itself uncommonly wrought.

"It's the whitest diamond I've ever seen," Catharine admired. "It looks as if it might have been condensed from snow. Where did you find it?"

"In a curio shop in that funny little street that wriggles from Walnut to Barclay. I took a short cut through there this morning and stopped to look into the window of the shop. I went in on a venture and a dried-up Oriental showed me this ring. He had just received it from a dealer in curios in Calcutta. He expected to hear what it's history is by the next letter. He hinted that it has some charm but of course that is only an eastern superstition as well as a trick of the curio trade. It catches the gullible, because the dealers claim there is some superstition in all of us. It was away out of the ordinary, and I bought it, as I have said, for a girl who is away out of the ordinary."

Her face had slowly lost its glow. "I wonder what charm it is supposed to have, Reeder."

"What!" he exclaimed, with affectionate joviality. "Are the dealers right? Has even my little woman a bit of superstition?"

"Nonsense!" she returned. "I'm not so unusual that I don't have some feminine curiosity."

"Prove that you're not superstitious," he bantered, "by letting me put the ring on your third finger."

"Not until we talk with Father," she objected. "I know he will tell me to put it on, but we must see him. Let us go up to him."

They rose to the second floor and entered a room luxuriously fitted up as a study. Tall, dignified, with a smooth-

shaven face that could be extreme in severity as well as indulgence, Judge Graymond was at work upon a mass of legal documents on a flat-topped desk.

His intent expression relaxed into one of pleasure. He sprang up and greeted Reeder in a manner that could not be misinterpreted. Then Catharine held up the box so that the diamond flashed its message. Parental solicitude sobered his face as he took the box from her and gazed at the gem glittering from its black nest.

"Of course I've been expecting this," he spoke at last, with a little quaver of regret. "If I had had any objection you would have heard from me long ago. You have my loving wishes and—"

The tray in which the ring rested suddenly fell into his palm, and the three saw a folded paper in the bottom of the case. Catharine picked it out. She opened up a long strip and, after glancing over it, said:

"Here is a paragraph repeated in many languages—Greek, Turkish, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese. Oh, here is the English translation. I will read it:

"This plighting ring comes down from remote antiquity. Its origin is not definitely known but the design and workmanship suggest Egypt. It has graced the fingers of beautiful queens and princesses. Both happiness and misery have attended its possession. It has a miraculous quality that has played a dramatic part in many lives. When used as a betrothal ring and worn by the woman in the presence of the man, if there has been in the life of either of them, or continues at the time of the betrothal, any other passion of the heart or any unworthiness that may threaten the peace or permanency of the marriage, the stone will turn yellow. The marvelous feature of the charm is that the eyes of the unworthy one cannot see the change of hue. Only the perfect in life and heart can see it."

A surprised silence followed. Slowly Catharine refolded the strip of paper and put it back in the case. Her father replaced the tray. Under the electrolier the gem glittered with a new and uncanny brilliance. Its sparkles seemed to have the power of shining into the heart and testing its deepmost impulses. The three looked upon it in fascination.

Judge Graymond's laugh broke the silence, but it was not an easy one. "Nonsense," he ridiculed. "The color of this bit of carbon couldn't change except by magic, and no one believes in that these days. Go, my dears, and forget it."

"Of course we'll forget it," Cromelin answered. "Catharine and I are distinctly twentieth-century."

The judge gave Catharine a kiss and caress of blessing, and the young couple went down to the parlor. There Reeder plucked the ring from the case, held it up, and Catharine presented her third finger. Suddenly she arrested her hand. At the same moment he withdrew the ring. They looked into each other's eyes.

"Why did you hesitate, Cathie?" he asked, his eyes twinkling.

"Why did you pull the ring back?" she asked in turn, but her eyes did not twinkle. Seriousness was in their blue depths.

"I don't know why," he answered. "The ring could not change color if we were both monsters of depravity."

"Of course not, but—there are some inexplicable things in the East. Suppose—"

"Suppose what?"

They were wordless for some minutes.

At last she went on: "Suppose you were sure the ring could turn yellow on account of something that would make our marriage a failure, would you be afraid to put it on my finger, Reeder?"

He hesitated for the fraction of a sec-

ond. "Would you be afraid to have me put it on, Cathie?"

"That is begging the question."

He snapped the case-lid shut. "I'll get another ring, Cathie."

Her hand fell upon his arm. "That would be confessing that we are superstitious, or that we are both afraid. No, no! We must use the ring now."

"Listen, dearie. If this ring had the power to change color, I do not know of anything in my heart or life that would make it do so, but there are all kinds of tendencies in the best of us and many kinds of unworthiness. Suppose I should put the ring on you and a look of horror and distress would come to your face. I couldn't stand that."

"But suppose I should see the look on your face, Reeder?"

"You would not see it."

"That is the point. I would be afraid you had hidden it from me. And I might never know whether you had seen the yellow hue or not."

"Neither would I."

"Yes, you would, Reeder. If I should see it, I would have to tell you and you would have to explain. Perhaps I ought to insist now on knowing just why you pulled the ring back. Oh, what shall we do?"

"I'll take the ring back to the dealer and buy another," he repeated, moving the case toward his pocket.

Again she caught his arm and slipped the box from his fingers. "Reeder," she said, "we must not be weak. What you suggest would leave us with a lingering doubt of each other. We are not children. Put the ring on my finger."

He caught the box from her and retreated. "No, I don't want to put the ring on you now."

She followed him, distress upon her face. "Reeder, tell me—are you afraid of something in your life or in your heart?"

He looked down into her face and kissed her. "Neither. I will put the ring on you, dear."

Again he held the ring between his thumb and fore-finger. She extended her left hand. Suddenly she drew it away and stepped back.

"You are afraid, Cathie. You are afraid!"

"Oh, no, not afraid, but—"

"Now I'm determined to take it back. I will not have you worried over this nonsense."

"But it would worry me far more now to have you take it back," she cried. "Give me the ring and I'll think about it until tomorrow."

He gave her the trinket.

"Reeder," she asked, trying a lighter tone but failing, "Tell me the truth. Were you afraid?"

"We must not think of this superstitious thing a minute, Cathie."

"I know, but suppose—suppose you should know that I am afraid to let you put the ring on; afraid that you have the eyes of the worthy and would see the yellow hue and I wouldn't. Would you still be willing to marry me?"

Again he hesitated. "Any minute, dearie. I would be willing to have you send for the minister now. But suppose the ring could change color, and you knew that I would be afraid to put it on you, would you risk marrying me?"

She leaned toward him and raised her clenched hands. "This is terrible! You know I would not dare marry you, then, don't you?"

"I'll throw the diabolical thing into the river."

"That would not help. The harm is done. It has made both of us doubt. I will keep the ring until tomorrow and we must think—and pray."

They looked again, deep into each other's eyes. The lovelight was there but dimmed by distrust. Their parting

was far from the unaffectionate one. The devilish ring had brought its spell, not supernatural, but still a spell.

Cromelin tramped the streets for an hour, and about 10.30 went into his favorite club. Walking aimlessly about, he stopped upon the threshold of a room. Judge Graymond sat alone at a table. He motioned the young man to join him, a smile of welcome brightening the judicial gravity of his face. Reeder walked to him.

"Well, my boy," the judge asked with a laugh, "did that Egyptian stone turn yellow?"

Cromelin sat down slowly. "Catharine did not put it on."

Graymond leaned toward him. "Why?"

"When I held the ring up for her she —she drew back."

"What! My girl at this age, yielding to such a superstition! She shall hear from me tomorrow."

Cromelin's restraining hand fell upon his forearm. "No: it wasn't the superstition. We don't believe in that for a second. But we began supposing. Suppose the ring had the power to turn yellow on account of some unworthiness—what then?"

The judge leaned nearer, more grave each instant.

"And you," he asked, his eyes fast upon the youth. "If it had that power, would you be afraid to put it on my girl's finger? The truth, mind. Would you?"

"N—o."

"You hesitate. See here, my boy. Has there been anything in your past life, worthy or unworthy, or is there anything in your heart this minute that would make that diamond turn yellow, if it had the power?"

Cromelin squarely returned his sharp gaze. "You shall have the truth. But if I give the truth, I shall expect the truth from Catharine. Why did she hesitate to let me put the ring on her finger? Was she—dear little Cathie—afraid I might see the stone change color?"

Graymond's face crimsoned. "Do you mean to insinuate—"

"I insinuate nothing, sir. She hesitated when I held up the ring. I must know why."

Graymond clutched the edge of the table. "You shall know. I shall get the truth from her tomorrow."

Cromelin rose, his brow drawn. "You must not. We will say nothing more about the ring. Tomorrow I will take a conventional solitaire to Cathie."

Shaking his gray head, the judge began to pace the floor.

"It's the best course, sir," Cromelin argued. "No one could make me believe there is anything unworthy in Cathie's life or heart. I could dismiss the ring and never think of it again."

The judge stopped before him. "That is manly in you. But could Catharine do that? No, she couldn't. She would not dare. A woman is entitled to—*know*. How are we to persuade her that there is nothing unworthy in your heart or life? Have you had other affairs?"

"Certainly. I haven't been a recluse, Judge."

"Serious?"

"I thought they were serious at the time."

"Out with the truth. If that ring were magical, would you expect Catharine to see it turn yellow?"

"Certainly not."

"You regard yourself as utterly worthy, then?"

Reeder's eyes did not waver an instant. "You are a man, Judge, and I am a man. I don't profess to be an angel. If I were one, I'd be mighty lonely down here among the rest of you men. If you had had that ring when you became engaged to Catharine's mother, would you have

expected her to see it turn yellow?"

"That is irrelevant."

"Pardon me, no. I want you to realize that you must not expect me to be better than other young men. I can assure you that I am no worse than the average."

"In other words, you want me to see that you are as humanly imperfect as I was."

"Precisely. And it is the same with dear little Cathie."

Graymond knit his studious brows. Then he admitted:

"Yes, she is only human, after all. She yields to the bare possibility that the ring might turn yellow, and she does not wish to be disappointed in you."

"Oh, come, Judge," Cromelin met him, his eyes steady. "If I didn't believe in my heart that Cathie is all that she should be, I wouldn't be crazy with eagerness to put that ring on her finger. We are told that God made man a little lower than the angels, and you know as well as I do that that does not mean that woman is not with the mass. There may be the most destructive tendencies in Cathie's heart. You don't know there are not. I don't. She may be now unconscious of them herself. They may snap a marriage bond as if it were a cobweb. I love her with all my heart, but I have learned something about women and I'm not sentimental enough to class even her with the good, made perfect. We all have a knowledge of evil. What else can be expected in a reeking world? Cathie herself has seen enough to know that none of us is as white as that diamond. And I am sure, Judge, that you wouldn't want to trust her with some innocent who wouldn't know enough of the world to protect her from its dangers."

Pacing the floor, the judge had let the momentum of the young man's earnestness and anxiety expend itself. Then he turned and asked if he had the ring with him.

"No. Cathie wished to keep it until tomorrow."

"Oh!"

He stood a few moments, his brows drawn in solicitous thought.

"That shows she thinks you should use the ring," he argued. "But I don't believe you and she can decide this matter that means much for your future. I'll take it under advisement as we say in court. If you can come to the house tomorrow evening, I'll give you my decision."

Reeder caught his hand in an excess of apprehension. "Think of some way to drive out Cathie's doubt of me, sir," he entreated. "I can't live without her. If I'm unworthy, I'll do anything to make my heart as white as that diamond."

"I believe you, my boy; I believe you," the judge comforted him.

Cromelin walked next evening along the judge's hallway to where a light shone through the library doorway. From the threshold he saw Catharine reading at the table. Distressed over the situation, he felt that he had never been so glad to see her. He slipped quietly to her chair to give her a surprise. She sprang up, gave a little gasp, and clapped her right hand over her left.

"Oh, Reeder!" she cried, "I am wearing the ring."

"Good! Let us look at it."

"Oh—I don't know," she hesitated, still covering the stone. "The more I think over the matter, the more afraid I get. Oh, I just am afraid that you have the eyes of the worthy, Reeder, and you would see the diamond turn yellow and—"

"How can you say that?" he broke in. "I couldn't possibly see it change color. The man is always the unworthy one. But, come, dear. Let us look at it and end this suspense."

"No, no, I dare not let you see," she resisted, as she pulled the ring from her finger.

"You dare not?" he questioned leaning toward her.

"No, I dare not, Reeder. I—oh, I know I am not perfect and—"

"Of course you are not. I did not expect you to be. But—"

She caught up the box from the table and thrust the ring into the black cushion. "Take it back, Reeder," she cried. "I am afraid of it. I think it is best for you to get another if—"

"But if you are so afraid, Cathie, I ought to know what you are afraid of, and perhaps I would not—"

"Oh, Reeder!"

They gazed at each other in dismay. Doubt, distrust, despair seemed to be thickening the air of the room. In the silence a heavy step sounded. Judge Graymond hurried from the doorway, where he had been listening.

"Give me that ring," he commanded.

Cromelin obeyed. The judge looked down at the case for a minute.

"You will use this ring," he gave his decision, "or I do not consent to your engagement."

"Father!" Catherine cried.

"I mean it. Your fear to use it now will rise up as a reproach in the coming days. I am going to lock this ring up for six months. That will give you time to examine your hearts and make yourselves perfect."

"Six months!" Reeder echoed.

"Six months—six terrible months!" Catharine repeated.

"Six months," her father repeated also, with the solemnity of pronouncing a long prison sentence. "At the end of that time it will be this ring or good-bye."

The couple stood tense in the silence.

"But, Judge," Cromelin protested, gripping his sleeve, "I love Cathie. I'll never love anybody else. And I'm eager to trust anything that may be in her heart."

"And I couldn't love anybody but Reeder, Father," Catharine cried. "I know he would always try to do what is right. I wouldn't be afraid to marry him this minute."

The judge snapped the box open and thrust it into Cromelin's hand. "Precisely what I wanted you both to say. The only possible thing we mortals can do is to have faith in one another. I'm not afraid now of either of you. Here, Cathie, let him put the ring on you."

Without hesitation she extended her finger and Reeder quickly encircled it. Instantly her hand shot into the light of the electrolier.

"Still white—still white!" she exulted.

"What else could it be, dearie?" Cromelin rejoiced.

"Perhaps both of us have the eyes of the unworthy," she voiced a lingering doubt.

"To be sure you have," her father laughed, pinching her cheek. "No one on this faulty old ball is perfect. None of us could see the diamond turn yellow, even if it could. That is the point the crafty Oriental built his paragraph on. But each of you knows now that the other isn't an angel, and that is good. That, plus love and confidence, is the safest footing for marriage. My hand, Reeder. A kiss and my loving blessing, Cathie, dear."

The Thousand Dollar Bill

BY STANLEY SHAW

An adventurer of the world stumbles over mystery and crime within eye range of his New York Club. He unravels a mystery and then promptly ravels it up again to the disgust of the police, and buys a railroad ticket for an "ex-con."

AMRACH had traveled the length of South America again and again in search of fresh hunting sensations; he had spent two years among the Esquimaux, potting bears and other Arctic fauna; the tigers and elephants of India were as familiar to Jamrach as strap hangers to a subway guard, and now he was bored.

It has been stated that all things on this earth vibrate to certain notes on either the diatonic or the chromatic scale; could one discover the proper chord one might thus make a skyscraper tremble. The chord of Jamrach's soul was adventure; his whole being vibrated to it like a tuning fork to its true key.

Jamrach was tall and trim and hard as nails; there were tiny wrinkles radiating from his eyes, and he had a habit of keeping them half shut that told of snow blink, of desert glare, and of constant effort to expand the pupil and push vision beyond the normal. His hands were lean, the fingers long and thin, capable of doubling a silver dollar upon itself without effort; and yet Jamrach had performed that feat but once; he discovered it attracted attention. One never heard of any thing Jamrach did from his own lips.

The Exploration is the quietest, drowsiest club on earth; quiet and drowsy because it is well nigh impossible to catch more than half a dozen members present at the same hour. They pay their dues punctually, keep a chamber, some of them, and plan to drop in for the biennial dinner, or to spend an hour or two in the silver grill when fitting out in New York for the next trip to Kamchatka or Patagonia or wherever a desire to nose out new things may take them. The Exploration is thus a perfect paradise for the servants in charge; they have nothing to do save keep constantly prepared for a hundred guests who never arrive; yet such an idle life is not conducive to the making of sound souls; his Satanic Majesty is reputed to devote especial attention to all mortals so situated.

Having, as he thought, squeezed dry of excitement this little orange we egotistically call *the* earth, and having spent six lonely days in the Exploration Club surrounded by enough servile attendants to meet the slightest wishes of three score of the most exacting mortals, Jamrach's six feet of big, brown, blond, body itched to be off, to be in action ; but where! And watching the endless stream of crawling motor cars out on the avenue was, today, the limit of excitement possible to this bundle of healthy bone, brains, and muscle registered on the books of the Exploration as "Peter Thurston Jamrach, bachelor, aged 36," and, it might have been properly added, millionaire several times multiplied, citizen of the world, at home anywhere—and at home nowhere, for long.

It is because the Exploration lies very close to the avenue on 18th Street, and because it has a big bow window overhanging the first story on the front, that one who wishes may sit therein and

watch the passing procession that ceaselessly flows north and south through some twelve hours of the twenty-four in New York. And, having nothing else to do, Jamrach outwardly watched and inwardly raged. First a red racer, then a green limousine, then a black with a pony tonneau, then another green with a graceful gray electric prodding its rear tire! Heavens! It was enough to anesthetize an elephant, and Jamrach's eyelids had begun to droop when the contracted pupil caught a figure turning the avenue corner and shuffling up 18th Street toward the club.

It was only an old, ragged beggar with unwashed, ugly face, one eye, and a withered arm, who occasionally stopped a passing pedestrian and whined his automatic appeal into an unwilling ear; not an uncommon sight in a city that supports several thousand medicants, yet Jamrach's eyes suddenly left the monotonous stream of motor cars and focussed on the beggar.

It was not the oddity of a mendicant working 18th Street that arrested Jamrach's attention; but the fact that for six days he, sitting in this same bow window, had observed that identical one-eyed beggar shuffling around the corner of Fifth Avenue at this same precise hour and minute. "I wonder if he'll go through the same performance tonight as usual," thought Jamrach.

The arc lights began to snap their way down the length of 18th Street. There was a light directly in front of the club and clustered around the pole were three ash cans overflowing with refuse.

The unkempt beggar, after gazing about to see if he were observed, began poking about in these ash cans, then quickly drew a carefully wrapped package from beneath his ragged coat, shoved it down into a corner of a can, and turned to shuffle away.

"Not according to Hoyle at all," muttered Jamrach as he watched the performance. "For six days the chap has taken a neatly wrapped package *away* at this precise hour, now he's bringing one back. By George! I wonder what it means, I'd give something to know what the devil is in that package!"

After fulfilling his errand at the ash can the beggar began to shrilly whistle a tune through his black teeth and strode off toward Sixth Avenue, no longer accosting passers, but striding along as if with a full stomach and a contented mind.

"I'm just fool enough to go down and dig out that thing in the ash can," thought Jamrach as he stepped toward the rack, took down his hat and cane, and passed out onto the sidewalk. "Feel like a kiddie falling for a first of April joke, but I'm game," he murmured as he started to cross the street, made out to stumble his tall form against the ash can, upsetting its contents on the walk and covering his trousers with considerable dust, yet affording an opportunity to pick out from the debris a neatly wrapped package some four by eight inches in size. The parcel was covertly transferred to Jamrach's inner coat pocket as he started down 18th Street on the same course taken by the one-eyed beggar.

Jamrach, however, had passed scarce half a block before curiosity got the better of him and he took the package from his pocket. It was rather heavy, wrapped in brown paper, and tied with gray twine. He snapped the knot loose, unwound the paper, and then opened his eyes very wide as he drew out a perfectly good, yellow-backed thousand dollar bill and two sheets of thin, black metal, somewhat larger in size than the bill.

"Jumping kangaroos!" exclaimed Jamrach. "That blessed beggar with a thousand dollars! And using an ash can for a bank! I'd better catch him and hand him back his money with a few

kind words on the fallibility of ash receptacles as cash containers." Tossing aside the two bits of metal, Jamrach trotted after the beggar, who had just turned the downtown corner.

One of the bits of metal thrown aside by Jamrach fell into a gutter filled with oily mud, sliding thence into a nearby culvert; the other tinkled against the stone curbing and rebounded to the asphalt street. This tinkle caught the attention of an inconspicuous, ratty little chap who happened to be hanging about the other side of 18th Street at that particular moment. The ratty chap darted across, picked up the metal, which he may have hoped was a coin, whistled softly to himself, and followed Jamrach.

As Jamrach reached the corner he caught sight of the one-eyed beggar hurrying down Sixth Avenue. He was a massive fellow with a stubby gray beard, frowzy hair, and a hat that appeared to have done hard service for several generations of owners.

The beggar moved fast and Jamrach had followed so far as the old Jefferson Market building without being able to overtake him, when the fellow suddenly turned west into the maze of streets known as the "cow paths." Here the beggar finally stopped before an old, time-battered building, evidently used as a residential rookery for the city's fast-growing foreign population, a score of whom might be seen hanging out of the windows in all stages of blowsy dress and undress.

The beggar mounted the steps of this structure and again began to whistle shrilly through his teeth, whereat all the outhanging heads were jerked inside the windows with amazing rapidity. It was a four-story structure, and Jamrach caught the beggar's heavy footfalls on the top stairway as he, himself, entered the door and mounted the first flight, idly wondering, meanwhile, at the strange quiet that had suddenly fallen over the premises. As Jamrach came up the street the entire building had fairly pulsated with life and noise—shouting, singing, the beating of a tinny piano, the sound of someone torturing a cornet. Since the arrival of himself and the one-eyed beggar, it had suddenly become as quiet as the grave. It was almost uncanny.

Going up the first flight of stairs Jamrach was aware of a wonderful amount of dirt and disorder and of several forms who silently inspected him and then slid quietly inside convenient doorways. A peculiarity of these people was that they mostly had arms or legs missing, or were afflicted with some disease that twisted their bodies in a revolting and unaccountable manner.

The second flight of uncarpeted stairs and the hallway took Jamrach through the same conditions of squalor as the first, but, at the last landing, he noticed a marked change. The hall was neatly carpeted, the single door was of panelled mahogany, and a handsome electrolier filled the space with a warm glow.

"Strange quarters for a beggar!" muttered Jamrach as he stopped to gaze about. "Yet I am certain I heard that one-eyed chap clumping up this flight; couldn't mistake his tread after following it a mile."

Jamrach had stridden toward the door to knock when it opened, permitting a young woman to step out and confront him. She closed the door softly as Jamrach took in the vista of an elegantly furnished apartment behind her.

The young woman was slight and fair-haired. Placing one hand on Jamrach's arm, she whispered in an agitated manner, "Go away, quick, you don't know what you are doing in coming here. He is changing his clothes; if you once come inside he will never permit you to go out alive."

The girl was plainly in great distress; her eyes shone earnestly beneath the shadow of her hair; yet her words meant little to Jamrach; he had come to return a thousand dollar bill to a beggar, and now a beautiful young woman was urging him to depart without doing so.

"There must be some mistake," apologized Jamrach. "I merely called to find a one-eyed beggar with a withered arm, who left a sum of money in front of my club.

"I know," urged the young woman, her agitation increasing. "And you do not understand anything about it, and you must not try to. I am supposed to be entertaining you inside until he gets his clothes changed. Now you must go away, quick. I believe he would kill me if he knew I were warning you," and the young woman tried to urge Jamrach toward the stairway.

Peter Thurston Jamrach had, hitherto, found as little use, or opportunity either, for female companionship as does any constant traveler spending twelve months of the year searching the world for wild game. Through his college days he had made the usual number of girl friends; but a trip to South America, begun the month after graduation, had so thoroughly driven women from his thoughts that, up to this hour, he had scarcely realized, except in a vague impersonal way, that such a sex existed. Now it suddenly burst over Jamrach's mind, like a wave of warm air on a winter day, that here was a ripping fine young woman whose appearance he rather liked.

"I trust you will pardon my insistence," he explained rather diffidently, for this was an entirely new situation to Peter Jamrach, big-game hunter, "but I do not think I have anything to fear from anyone. If you will kindly ask the 'he' to whom you refer to step to the door, I will, if he happens to be a one-eyed beggar with a withered arm, hand him his money. That will close the incident, as far as he is concerned; but I should like to assure you that if you have anything to fear from this same person I am entirely at your service," and Peter Thurston Jamrach rather hoped there might be some sort of a fight arranged right there and then. It would be pleasant excitement.

"Do, please, leave this house," urged the girl in a tense whisper; "it will be rendering me the greatest service in your power."

"But the thousand dollar bill," Jamrach protested.

"Oh, bother the bill!" exclaimed the young woman. "If you don't go at once I shall scream; that will bring every person in the house up here and they are very likely to tear you to pieces. They are all professional beggars and fiends when at home. Now will you please hurry away."

Jamrach, realizing that to argue longer were useless, went down the stairs. Turning to look back as he placed his foot on the last step, he found two tearful eyes watching him from above like twin stars in a curtained night; and that is why this unpoetic adventure hunter swung down the street dreaming of goddesses with glowing eyes and many other matters entirely foreign to his usual train of thought.

"Well, of all the goes!" he murmured as he walked rapidly toward Sixth Avenue. "Why does a ragged, one-eyed beggar have a thousand dollar bill, deposit it in an ash can, and disappear in an elegantly furnished apartment, situated on the top floor of a dirty west-side tenement; and, above all, why should an apparently refined young woman, of much more than ordinary beauty, become mixed up in an affair that makes her fear for her life if she warns someone of what might happen?" Jamrach decided that he must under-

stand the whole thing more clearly.

Returning to his club, Jamrach had just turned into Sixth Avenue when he became aware of someone hurrying along behind him. He turned and saw that this person evidently desired to catch his attention.

The man approaching was a ratty little chap, less than five feet tall, dressed in a gray suit of clothes with the coat buttoned close about his neck. He had a hoarse throaty voice and spoke through one corner of his mouth as he came up: "I'm Higgs, connected with the plain-clothes force. Wouldn't care to mention it, but I must have a few words with you on a certain matter. You are Peter Jamrach, and you just came from old Sidewheel's barracks."

"How on earth did you discover my name and what do you want?" inquired the astonished Jamrach, who had been observing the little fellow with an amused air.

"Why, you see, friend, I've been hanging about the Exploration all day," answered Higgs as they walked along, adding hoarsely through the opposite corner of his mouth, by way of confidential parenthesis, "according to the chief's orders, you know, chap there he wanted to keep an eye on. Having seen you going in and out I looked you up and found out about you. I was just coming back from a bite to eat when you threw that bit of metal into the gutter a little while ago. Now, touchin' on and appertainin' to this matter, as New York's 'best' used to say, I'll ask you, Mr. Jamrach, if you will step around to 14th Street, where we can sit comfortable at a table with something wet between us, and talk? I want you to tell me all about that piece of metal."

Thinking that this odd little chap might offer some help in explaining the matter uppermost on his mind, Jamrach expressed his willingness to accompany Higgs and they soon arrived at the basement entrance to a cellar restaurant on 14th Street. Higgs led the way to a rear table where he drew out a chair for Jamrach and fell into one opposite himself, unbuttoning his coat and throwing it back to disclose a vest of most violent red, worn beneath his modest gray suit. Jamrach could not conceal a start of astonishment as this glare of gorgeous color smote his eye.

"I know it," explained Higgs, glancing down, not without a look of pride, at his waistcoat. "It's my one failing. I used to be a jockey and I can't get over liking a bit of color on my front. Rather neat, eh, what? Though the chief says it's all wrong and I must keep it covered if I got to wear it. What will you have, Mr. Jamrach?"

"Anything you like to order, Mr. Higgs," answered Jamrach, thoroughly enjoying this meeting with the quaint ex-jockey.

"Then make it two darks of the imported, Alfred, and without," ordered Higgs of a waiter who stood by.

"Aw cut it shorter, Lengthy, my name's Barney, not Alfred, an' wit'out what?" growled the waiter.

"Without impertinence," cheerfully answered Higgs. "And always remember, Alfredo, the tallest man does not always give the tallest tip."

"Now that we can be comfortable," continued Higgs to Jamrach as the two glasses of Wurtzburger were brought, "let me explain. My name's Chowster Higgs, bally measly name, isn't it? But it's the best my mammy could find kicking about when I was due to be christened. You may have heard it before; I won the Suburban once on El Rio Rey; some said it was by a fluke, but the judges decided 'twas by a head, and I got the money along with a little rep' for Chowster Higgs, the English jock', that proved to be a burst bubble when his

whiskers signed that anti-betting bill up at Albany some years ago. After that I did work for my friends the 'Pinks' for awhile and, finally, got connected with the regular plain-clothes force; but the commish' doesn't give me anything good to work on; just keeps me snooping 'round the streets to see where certain parties go and what they do. I'll explain, later on, why I'm making a father-confessor of you, but just now I want you to tell me about that little piece of metal you tossed away and why you went over to call on Sidewheel, the beggar padrone."

"I'll tell you about that on condition that you tell me who Sidewheel is," bargained Jamrach, entirely in the dark regarding why this little police stool pigeon should take an interest in his affairs.

"Sidewheel is called 'The King of the Beggars,' " answered Higgs. "He owns that building over in the cow paths and lives there with an old negro wench for a housekeeper. He has about fifty crip's, fit throwers, panhandlers, and strong-arm whiners workin' for him all the time, and he must be worth a lot of money. Now about that bit of metal you threw away?"

The little ex-jockey had, apparently, been so frank that Jamrach was inclined to be equally outspoken and gave Higgs the details of how he found the thousand dollar bill and his attempts to restore it to its supposed rightful owner, suppressing only the facts of his brief interview with the young woman at the door, permitting Higgs to infer that he had been refused admittance by the negro housekeeper.

"Whe—ew! Why, blow me eye, but as the green pavement pounder said when he found the smashed window, 'it's much more serious than I supposed, it's broken on both sides,' " exclaimed Higgs. "A thousand dollar bill! And old Sidewheel has been takin' away a package, just like the one you found in that ash can, for six days. Boss, this is a big case. I gotter take it right down to the commish'. You'll have to excuse me from sayin' any more about it."

"But aren't you going to explain the meaning of all this?" asked Jamrach, thoroughly interested.

"I don't dare to now," answered Higgs, buttoning his coat tightly to the neck to conceal the gaudy vest and leading Jamrach toward the door. "I'll meet you tomorrow morning at the Exploration Club at nine o'clock," and the ratty little ex-jockey darted off down the avenue.

"Now I wonder!" murmured Jamrach as he watched him in somewhat of a daze. "Is that fellow what he purports to be? Somehow, I've an idea that police workers are not quite as free in their speech as he seemed to be, although he may have been merely leading me on to talk. Come to think of it, he knows all I know, while I have discovered absolutely nothing that he knew about this matter of a one-eyed beggar and his thousand dollar bill; yet I don't see that there is anything for me to do now but to curb my impatience until I meet Mr. Chowster Higgs in the morning," and Jamrach strode off up the avenue.

Upon gaining the Exploration Club, Jamrach, after ordering a nightcap of Scotch and soda to be brought to his chamber, prepared to retire. His suite of parlor, sleeping room, and bath was on the top floor, front, of the building, at the end of a long corridor into which opened some three or four similar apartments, owned by the members but now unoccupied.

The nightcap was brought by a waiter unfamiliar to Jamrach, a thin, elderly fellow with stooping shoulders, transparent skin through which a stubble of beard showed faintly, and close cropped hair. It was the facial pallor and the

peculiar restlessness of the man's hands that caught Jamrach's attention. They were long, thin hands, like his own, with tapering fingers; but, while Jamrach's hands were as quietly powerful as though made of steel, this fellow's betrayed a singular degree of acute sensitiveness as the fingers of one kept restlessly moving about the back of the other, barely touching the flesh, almost as if words for the blind were imprinted thereon.

"Were you wishful of anything more tonight, sir?" inquired the waiter as he set down the tray. Jamrach noted that the man's voice was thin and reedy,as if extended conversation and he were not close acquaintances. His red-rimmed eyes, instead of meeting those of Jamrach, roved restlessly about the room as if brain-registering every detail of an unfamiliar location, as he continued: "Care to have your clothes pressed, sir? They do very nice pressing here, I understand, although I'm new here myself; came a week ago. My name is Antoine."

"Antoine!" thought Jamrach. "Maybe; but it doesn't fit your face." Aloud he said, as he drew off his coat and tossed it toward a chair: "Nothing more tonight, Antoine, I shall be quite comfortable as I am, thank you."

The waiter, instead of considering himself dismissed, showed surprising agility for an old man. He sprang forward, caught the coat Jamrach had tossed toward a chair, threw it across his arm, and urged:

"Better have your coat pressed, sir; it appears very wrinkled. I'll see that it is ready for you in the morning before I come in to turn on your water."

"No, no!" protested Jamrach. "Throw that coat over a chair and get out. If I require further service I will ring for it."

As the waiter closed the door behind him Jamrach murmured: "I wonder why on earth that waiter was so anxious for me to have my clothes valeted. By George! I have it, that thousand dollar bill, it's in my coat pocket! So, Monsieur Antoine with the Milesian features, perhaps you, too, are interested in that money!" Jamrach slipped into bed, tipped off the lights, and was soon enjoying the sound sleep of a healthy animal.

The wide transom above Jamrach's chamber door was open, permitting the hall electric to shine through in a stream of light that fell across the rug near the bed. The Metropolitan Tower clock was just booming twelve-thirty when Jamrach's regular breathing suddenly stopped and his eyes snapped open with the instinct of a man trained to sleep in situations where life depends upon eternal vigilance. Wide awake on the instant, he did not move a muscle, but concentrated every faculty on listening. A faint rustle like the drawing of cloth over wood, caught his ear, while his eyes took in a circular shadow slowly moving into the shaft of light shining through the transom upon his dresser rug. It was, unmistakably, the outlines of a man's head with close-cropped hair. The shadowy head paused for a moment, evidently inspecting the room and the sleeper, then it slowly moved down again and out of sight. Jamrach heard a faint click at the chamber door, where he had left the key in the lock after turning it.

"Ah! My new-found friend, Antoine!" thought Jamrach. "Coming to pay me a call with a pair of key nippers. I shall be delighted to greet you." And he chuckled softly to himself as if this uncanny visitation were the most welcome event imaginable.

The door opened and Jamrach heard soft footfalls creeping about the room.

"Still obsessed with the notion that my clothes really do need pressing, Antoine?" asked Jamrach as he leaped from the bed and caught his midnight caller from behind by both arms with

those steel-like fingers of his, shaking a revolver from one hand of the waiter and his own coat from the other.

The grip on the waiter's arms was so tight that it made him scream with pain. "Have mercy!" he whined. "Have mercy on an old man, I was only coming after what was rightfully mine. That bill you picked out of the ash can this afternoon was put there for me and I wanted it. God, I wanted it."

"So?" said Jamrach, dragging the fellow toward the button and snapping on the lights. "Then why didn't you ask for it like a man?"

"I couldn't," weakly answered the waiter as he fell limply into a chair, breathing like a spent runner. "There were too many others concerned. I was thinking of her, I did it for her."

"Her!" murmured Jamrach thoughtfully as a sudden determination entered his mind. "Now look here, Antoine—and, by the way, I am certain your name isn't Antoine, and I know who Sidewheel is—the best thing you can do is to tell me all about this. I may be able to straighten it out for you. I'm just an everyday human being and I've no desire to see anybody get the worst of anything. We are all apt to stumble over the rigid lines of man-made laws, one time or another, and, if you have done so I'll be glad to help you get back. You can talk as frankly to me as you would to a priest of the church."

For an instant the two gazed into one another's eyes; then the elderly man gave a sigh of relief as he said weakly: "I believe you are the right kind, I'll tell you how it happened."

"Drink this first," said Jamrach, pulling a silver flask from his dressing table and pouring a generous measure of brandy into the cap. "You're all in; burglary was no business for you, you should be in a hospital."

"I know it," murmured the man as he drained the liquor. "There was where I came from eight days ago, the prison hospital up at Sing Sing. My name is Elleston. I'm a jeweller's engraver by trade. I got mixed up in an affair where gold filings were sold outside the shop, but, before God, I swear I was innocent. They gave me four years for it. My wife, thank God, was dead, but I had a daughter and she was left all alone in the world. Up at Sing Sing I met a fellow called Sidewheel; he was doing a short stir for holding up somebody. He had money and a pull. He found out I was an expert engraver and promised to look out for my girl if I'd try engraving a counterfeit plate for him. It was the only thing I could do for her and I did it. I had to work nights, in half darkness, with a bed blanket hung over the door; but my hands were better than eyes and Sidewheel said it was the finest plate ever turned out."

"And did Sidewheel look out for your daughter?" inquired Jamrach.

"He kept his bargain," answered Elleston. "I received letters from her regularly, although I never dared write. She was up at a very expensive finishing school at Yonkers the last letter I received. A week ago Tuesday my time was up. Sidewheel met me at the Grand Central and sent me here to take a job as waiter. He said it was a quiet place and I'd have a chance to finish up more plates. My bargain with Sidewheel was to engrave two plates for him and then have the genuine bill used for a copy to start life anew with. I had been leaving the plates out in the ash can every night for Sidewheel, who carried them to his home to take proofs. Tonight I was to do a little final work on them and then keep that thousand dollar bill. What did you do with those two plates he left with the bill?"

"Threw them away. I did not realize what they were," answered Jamrach.

"I suppose not. Sidewheel always waxed the cuttings so that no one would suspect, should the plates be discovered by accident. Tomorrow I was to go to Sidewheel's, see my daughter, and then start for the West. It was no use to stay about here; you don't know how the police hound an ex-convict."

"Was your daughter at Sidewheel's today?" inquired Jamrach.

"I think so. She came down from the school yesterday and was to return there tomorrow. Now I shall not see her again for many years," said Elleston pathetically, brushing one sleeve across his red-rimmed eyes.

"Nothing of the sort!" exploded Jamrach, rising. "You are going over to see her now, as quick as you can get there. Here's your perfectly good thousand dollar bill; you've proved your claim to it. And here are four more bills; they are all I have by me. Take them and welcome, and if you need more where you are going out West, I can always be reached in care of the Exploration. Now slip into my fur coat and hurry along, the morning is chilly," and Jamrach urged Elleston into his own heavy fur coat without permitting him to voice his gratitude.

"No! no! Not a word, I am glad to do it; only be sure you catch a train going West before nine tomorrow. I fancy there may be inquiries for you here after that hour."

Promptly at nine the following morning Jamrach, sitting in the bow window of the Exploration Club, saw a high-powered motor car shoot around the corner and draw up at the curb below. It contained Higgs, the ex-jockey, and a stout, florid-faced man with a stubby mustache and keen eyes.

"Horrigan, deputy commish,' has charge of the plain-clothes squad," explained Higgs, out of one corner of his mouth, to Jamrach as the two men came in, the second deputy police commissioner stopping a moment to speak with the club desk-clerk. "Horrigan wants a word with you about that thousand dollar bill, wants to see it," added Higgs.

"I am very sorry," answered Jamrach, rather listlessly, "but I haven't it. I returned it to its owner last night."

"Wh—at!" stuttered Higgs. "Returned it? Why, we were over to Sidewheel's at daylight this morning and the cage was empty, wasn't a soul in his apartment. We'd have gone last night, but the commish' was out of town."

"The other bird has flown, too," cried the florid-faced man, coming toward them. "Somebody's tipped off the whole bunch. Higgs, your case is a fluke." Then, turning to Jamrach, Horrigan continued: "I have been inquiring of your desk-clerk for an old man who recently came to work here as waiter. He tells me the chap disappeared last night and hasn't turned up."

"A thin fellow with a weak voice, pallid face, and nervous hands?" inquired Jamrach.

"That's him," answered Horrigan. "Where is he?"

"I—I think, he has gone—for good," declared Jamrach.

"Gone! Gone where?" barked the commissioner.

Jamrach, remembering that Elleston had planned to go West and that the commissioner with his vast resources might intercept the old man, even now, had a swift mental picture of those pitiful restless hands and the shattered form. It was this picture that prompted his reply.

"He's gone South—Cuba—I bought his ticket; that's all I know," answered Jamrach with dignified finality as his eyes strayed out of the window and began to watch the monotonous stream of motor cars out on the avenue.

The Joy Sponge

BY CHARLTON LAWFENCE EDHOLM

Every man who has met his kind will revel in the well-merited punishment a wide-awake salesman doled out to this "joy-sponge."

HAT fellow is a joy sponge! That's what he is, an avid absorber of free joy, and we real estate men are a lot of easy marks to fall for him."

"Oh, I don't know," replied the senior partner of the firm of Gentry and Chantry. "You are such an impulsive fellow, Bob, and just because a prospect does not buy, after seeing a dozen promising lots, is no sign that he is a deadbeat." The elder man's shrewd grey eyes narrowed to quizzical twinkling slits. "Perhaps he was merely traveling with a dead salesman," he chaffed.

The younger man flushed with swift anger. Young chaps with curly red hair and alert blue eyes are often quick at wrath, and Bob Chantry's six-foot of muscle, bone, and red corpuscle was topped by just such a combination. He sprang from his swivel chair—and immediately sat down again.

"I fell for it, Unkie," he chuckled. "You can always get me going when you insinuate that my salemanship is not up to my football record."

The older man laughed softly at the success of his little joke. "You're all right, Bob," he replied, "and as for this fellow Ord, I dare say you are correct about his being an avid absorber of your society, which you are kind enough to call 'joy.' But then, he may be a buyer after all; one of these deliberate fellows who will not make a snap judgement; unfeeling as a fish when he thinks that a salesman is trying to coerce him into an unprofitable buy, but ready with cash or gilt-edge reference when it comes to closing a deal. I'm inclined to favor men of that sort. They are hard to capture, but mighty fine connections when they are at last convinced."

"Well, you're dead wrong about Ord, Uncle George. He looks like that sort, but he's what the janitor called 'whitewashed saltpeter.' Since he turned down so many good buys, I've put in a little time at detective work looking up Mr. Ord's record, and I find that he's been victimizing the salesmen along auto row just the same way."

"I didn't know you were any relation to Sherlock Holmes!"

"Not at all. But I am good at figures up to ten, and when I'm barefoot, up to twenty."

"My boy, you've been imbibing," commented Gentry, looking at his nephew with a puzzled air.

"When I'm barefoot, I can count in my toes along with my fingers," explained the youth, "so I'm not so bad at figuring out little things. Well, it came to me the other morning, in the bath tub, that Mr. Ord must have some reason for wanting to see nothing but lots that were away out in the suburbs. He didn't seem to care about the cost, elevation, proximity to car lines, churches, and schools; didn't seem to know whether he wanted a brewery site or a tract for a chicken ranch or a fifty foot

frontage for a snug cottage in the country. All he wanted was something over the hills and far away. Then I figured out that for a sociable man, that was a queer taste; you know, he always brings a lady relation to help him make his decision."

"Nice looking relations they are too. I never met a man who had more pretty nieces and cousins."

"Yes, I thought of that when we were taking a spin out to the Ocean View Tract. One of the nieces remarked that the trip was a perfect joy-ride. Well, I've been to see some salesmen along auto row and it seems that Mr. Joy-Sponge Ord has been taking his lady friends riding at their expense for a couple of months. Wanted to buy a $5,000 touring car, didn't care what make, couldn't tell a carburetor from a kerosene can—just the state of mind he is in regarding our suburban lots. I tell you he's after free trips about the country, and now that the boys on gasoline row are wise to him, he's starting to work the real estate men. The worst of it is that he has plenty of coin. He used to be a loan shark before he retired from business."

"Looks as if you were on to him, Bob. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'll punch the rascal's head the next time he shows himself in the office."

"Rough work, my boy. Rough work. Wouldn't do at all. Let me think out a plan."

"But Uncle, he's not only a pest, but a bad example. The joy-sponge is likely to be a positive handicap to business if nothing is done to show him up."

"Leave it to me, Bob, I have a plan that I think will work. How does this strike you?"

The two partners got their heads together, and at the end of five minutes had outlined a campaign that made the younger man chortle with joy. "Uncle, you're the original schemer from Schemeville! The next time that flabby rascal shows up, we'll fix him."

They did not have long to wait. The following day at ten-thirty Mr. Ord strolled into the office of Gentry and Chantry and began to discuss suburban lots. "Have you anything out in the hills?" he demanded, "a nice tract in the foothills that could be developed into a gentleman's estate?"

"Who for?" queried Bob, careless alike of diplomacy and grammar.

But the shaft was too keen for the thick hide of Mr. Ord. He turned a pair of protruding dull brown eyes upon the innocent questioner and replied pompously, "For me, sir. I am thinking of setting out fruit trees and shrubbery, rare flowers and blossoming trees like the magnolia and the pergolia," he folded his plump hands across his fancy waistcoat, and added, "and other erotic flora."

Bob rose suddenly, seized with a violent fit of coughing, and consulted a map of the country. "I think I know just what you want," he announced, and he invited inspection of the diagram. "A ten-acre tract for a thousand dollars."

But the prospective buyer of country estates was in no mood for poring over maps. "Show me," he remarked abruptly. "Take me to it, young man, and we will discuss prices and other details on the ground. This is too fine weather to spend indoors."

"You're right," replied Bob Chantry, and he turned to his uncle. "We'll go out by the foothill road," he observed with a meaning wink, "and return by the Valley Boulevard. Back in a couple of hours."

As a matter of fact it took them almost two hours to reach the tract high among the foothills. They left the trolley line early in their jaunt and turned into a road that was apparently little travelled, for the prospective "gentleman's estate"

was in a section as yet undeveloped.

For one who contemplated a purchase, this uninhabited condition of the foothill tract was of remarkably slight consequence to Mr. Ord. He lolled back in the tonneau, puffing a huge cigar, which he had lighted without proffering one to the salesman. His bulging eyes, like those of an overfed pug, wandered contentedly over the landscape, and his enjoyment was so great that he did not bother about replying to Chantry's remarks about the realty situation. Bob thought this was a bit raw. On former occasions, the joy-sponge had made a pretense, at least, of studying the land with a view to purchase, and had usually paid for his rides with a black cigar. Bob threw in the high viciously, and they flew over a gentle up-grade.

Presently Ord spoke, or rather a growl issued from his fat throat. The salesman heard some remark about the absence of one of the nieces and mentally he blessed the headache that had detained her at the flat. "It spares complications," he thought. "Luck is with me."

It grew hot as they ascended a winding valley among the hills, and Ord lamented the lack of a top on the automobile.

"You might be cooler if you took a little walk up the hill," commented the real estate man blandly.

"What, walk in this infernal heat and dust!" The prospect's manner became openly offensive at the suggestion.

"Why, I haven't walked five miles in as many months! My feet are tender, and my shoes are new. I loathe walking!"

"You'd be in a pickle if we had an accident, then. It's fifteen miles to the trolley terminus, and there's not one vehicle a week passing over this road. The country's unsettled, as you have noticed."

"Yes, a beastly country. I don't like it. There is no use going further for I wouldn't take a piece of this raw mountain for a gift. Take me back."

"In other words, 'Home, James!' " observed Bob caustically. "Sorry, but I can't turn here in this narrow road. We'd never make it. After I've reached the little plateau up there, we can turn."

"Is that the tract you wanted to unload on me? That goat pasture!"

"That's it," admitted Bob sweetly. "Very appropriate, don't you think!"

Ord brooded over this retort and his wrath was stirred. "Looky here, young man, do you mean to insinuate that you've got my goat?" he blurted out. "Well, you're mistaken, that's all. You've wasted my valuable time dragging me out to see a worthless tract; made me swelter in the July sun in a car without a top, and spoiled my day's pleasure. But I'm through with you. Turn your old junk pile around and take me back to town!"

The last remark was foolish, for the narrow road ran along the side of a steep hill at this point. Bob looked back with a terrified expression. He was wrestling with the wheel, and the car began to wobble ominously. "Jump! Save yourself!" cried Bob, "the steering knuckle's broken!" At the same moment the car lurched toward the unprotected side of the road, as if it were ready to plunge into the abyss.

Ord jumped. He landed on all fours in the hot sand. When he had cleared the dust from his eyes and mouth he was amazed to see the car going steadily up the middle of the road instead of lying on its side in the ravine. He gathered himself up and ran after it, but the automobile had entered upon the plateau and turned before he overtook it.

"What a beastly trick!" he gasped, as he prepared to climb in. "Why, you bloody minded cub, I might have broken my leg jumping out over the back seat!"

Bob stared at the furious and per-

spiring man with an eye as cold and relentless as the ice bill. "Keep off my car!" he commanded. The tone meant business. As Ord relaxed his hold the car coasted past him, down hill, and he was left alone on the rocky plateau.

It was a splendid place to lay out formal gardens, for there was nothing growing there to interfere with any plans, but to call it a goat pasture would be cruelty to animals.

The ex-loan-shark gazed at the land with disgust. "A fine sort of a chump I'd be to pay $1,000 for that rock pile," he growled. "But I'd give a five spot to be home again," he added as he began the wearisome descent. Ord raised his mental bid several times in the next hour. There was no shade along the road and the sun blistered his fat neck. The dust kicked up by his tight patent leather shoes rose in his eyes and nostrils and, mingling with the copious dew upon his face, soon formed a nice little tract of suburban real estate. By the time he had trudged five miles to the Valley Boulevard, he was a limp and dejected spectacle. He had removed his coat and vest, which he carried over his shoulder hung on the end of a stick. His derby hat, grey with dust and dented from a fall in the road, had settled far back over his ears. At the end of the first mile he had been forced to discard his tight foot-wear, and thus he emerged upon the boulevard carrying his shoes in one hand and resembling more closely the typical hobo of the comic papers than anything off the vaudeville stage.

Just as he stepped upon the paved road he heard a single honk of an auto horn and gave a great sigh of relief. "Thank heaven, I'm back in civilization at last. I can get some good-natured chap with an automobile to take me home."

But, as if the auto horn had been a signal, there was a clicking of half a dozen camera shutters as this caricature of a "Weary Willy" set foot on the boulevard. He whirled around to find himself in focus of a battery of newspaper cameras, and instinctively ducked and covered his face with his hat. It was a useless precaution, the deadly work had been done and the joyous chorus of honk-honks of a dozen cars at the side of the road told him that he had walked into a trap.

How gladly he would have smashed those cameras! But there was no fight in the man, only brag and bluster when safe on his own ground, and the only time he had ever showed the aggressive was when collecting five per cent a month from some poor victim of his business methods.

Remembering that he had a well filled pocket book, he walked up to the first car with the idea of offering the driver ten dollars to take him home. To his dismay he looked into the smiling face of an automobile salesman who had given him many demonstration rides. This smiling youth did not wait for him to speak. He could read Mr. Ord's thoughts in his eyes and he remarked cheerfully, "Nix! Nothing doing! You couldn't ride with me for a hundred dollars!"

There were about a dozen nice new cars in line, all slick and shiny in their fresh paint and bright metal trimmings, but in the luxuriously upholstered seats of each car sat men that he knew—and men that knew him. Realizing that they had not come all this distance from town just to give him a lift, the ex-joy-sponge turned wearily toward home. As he trudged down the middle of the highway the cars fell in line behind him, the newspaper photographers jumped in, and the procession moved for a quarter of a mile or so amid a joyous noise of klaxons and honk-honks and the occasional click of a camera. Then, as the men whom he

had victimized had their fill of revenge, they dropped out of the procession one by one and sped homeward, leaving the footsore Mr. Ord to follow in their smoke.

It was a bitter, bitter pill, and there was still about ten miles of hard pavement between him and the trolley line. His only hope was that some stranger's car might pass and give him a lift.

Several did pass, but it was at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour and there was no stopping them. How should those haughty chauffeurs know that the flabby tramp that waved at them with a pair of shoes was willing to pay them for a ride almost anything that they chose to ask? Finally, bereft of all joy, the sponge sat down upon a milestone and panted. Tears of self-pity washed little runways down the dust of his cheeks. Then his eyes gleamed with hope. Once more the purr of an engine was heard in the distance, and presently a big touring car came slowly toward town. Ord hailed it frantically. It stopped. To his dismay he saw that it carried a member of the firm of Gentry and Chantry. Heaven be praised it was not the young brute that had humiliated him, but the older man. This one would listen to reason.

With more eloquence than he ever imagined he possessed, the joy-sponge made his plea, denouncing the younger man bitterly for his trick and quite unaware that his auditor, who regarded him with twinkling slits of grey eyes, was the very instigator of the plot.

Gentry's smile was so deceptive that Ord was about to climb into the car when the real estate man restrained him with a negative gesture.

"One moment, Mr. Ord. This car belongs to the firm and can only be used on company business. Now is it not true that you had no intention of buying property from us?"

Under the agent's keen appraising gaze, the other man's bluff could not hold. He stammered, denied, and finally confessed that he had never thought it unfair to secure a little free outing by pretending to be a customer.

"It never occurred to you that a salesman's time was worth anything to his employer?" queried the agent coldly. "You never considered that many of these young men that work hard to earn a commission have families to support? You never cared a rap about stealing their time, and yet I dare say you have quoted on a hundred occasions that little phrase about 'time is money.' Really, Mr. Ord, do you think you are any better than a thief?"

"Just take me back to town, Mr. Gentry, and I'll swear to you that I will never try it on again. Here is a twenty, take that, and let's call it square. I'm so tired that I can hardly stand and it seems like a year since I have had a drink."

"Then there is that little matter of gasoline," continued the agent impassively. "Your friend John D. has run it up to a stiff price of late and your little joy-rides have cost a good many dollars in hard cash to say nothing of wear and tear on the machinery."

"Well, what do you want, anyhow?" demanded Ord angrily. "If you're going to take me to town let me know what it is worth and I'll pay you."

"Now you're talking like a business man, Mr. Ord. I have itemized bills here from twelve automobile firms for gasoline and the time of their salesmen, and I have made out a little bill of my own on the same basis. It will cost you exactly $253.46 to square the old accounts, and if you will hand me that amount I will give you the proper receipts and carry you into town free gratis for nothing."

"Take it," groaned the ex-joy-rider,

and climbing into the front seat he pulled out his bill case and began to count out the currency. Gentry gravely passed him back the change in silver and coppers.

As the car proceeded, the memory of the clicking cameras came back to disturb him.

"Say, Mr. Gentry, now that that gasoline is all paid for, you will keep the story out of the papers, won't you? It would certainly lose me a lot of friends among some ladies I know if those pictures got into print."

"No sir," responded Gentry. "That story goes in as an object lesson to the rest of the joy-sponges, but if you were a real customer of mine, for instance if you were to purchase that ten-acre tract you were looking at, which is really worth the price we ask, I could undoubtedly use my influence to keep your name out of the story in tomorrow's papers. I am always willing to oblige a customer. And as for the photographs, I agree to hand you the negatives and all prints as a little bonus when the contract is signed. You might care to hang up the pictures in the house on that 'gentleman's estate' you were talking about."

The joy-sponge, a very dry sponge by this time, made no reply to this proposition until the signboard of the real estate office appeared at the corner. Then, as he painfully pulled on his shoes preparing to descend, he remarked in a chastened voice, "Mr. Gentry, I guess I'll buy that goat pasture. It ain't so much the land that I am stuck on, but the bonus alone is worth the money."

The Face in the Mirror

BY RICHARD MARTIN

A young man, to prevent his father wreaking revenge on the father of the girl he is to marry, commits burglary and is shot by the girl. She recognizes her lover and misunderstands the sacrifice but—oh, pshaw, here we are spoiling a good story.

FIVE—eleven—two—forty-four; now three to the right, six to the left, a complete turn, and *there* you are!"

Marion Tempest looked up at her lover and roguishly exclaimed, with a shake of her finger, "Well, Mr. Raffles, now you know the combination of Dad's new safe. You must never let him know that I told you. I wouldn't have trusted even you if the thing had only opened for me. But I simply had to get those papers in to-night."

"I don't blame your being scared. It's enough to make anybody nervous, sleeping alone in this solitary house. Mr. Tempest shouldn't have left you."

"He wouldn't have done so if he'd known the maid was going to be called away, but how was he to guess that?"

Hawley Flint looked worried. In tones that were almost surly he objected, "And the telephone's out of order, too. I don't like it, dear, it isn't right."

Having thrust the papers into security, she clanged the door upon them. Rising from her knees with his assistance, she turned to him a laughing face. "I'm not a bit afraid," she asserted.

The summer light, receding over the woodlands had become a vermilion streak along the western horizon; night was drawing in when Hawley Flint took his reluctant departure. He had already descended from the veranda when a sweet, half-petulant voice reminded, "Why sweetheart, you've forgotten something."

With a bound he returned and was leaning over her. Drawing her to him and gazing fervently into her deep grey eyes, he confessed the trouble which had obsessed him all day.

"I'm horribly worried, dear. Lord knows, we've waited patiently enough for our marriage, and now I fear it must be postponed again."

"More trouble with your father?"

"Yes, and worse than that."

"Well, so far as it concerns your father, you don't need to feel badly. We've not let him come between us yet, and I guess we won't ever. But it's dreadfully unfair of him to stand in our way just because of his quarrel with Dad."

"Yes, he's mighty bitter towards him. I've hesitated about telling you of some recent discoveries I've accidentally made. They concern Mr. Tempest and my father's office as district attorney."

"What do you mean?"

Marion clung to her lover in agitation. He tried to pacify her, speaking with affected light-heartedness. "It's nothing serious. I'll take care of it all right. There'll be no further cause for anxiety after this evening. Don't you bother your little head about that."

She was partly persuaded. "You've certainly acted strangely all day," she said. "You were even going away without kissing me good-night!"

"When I've told you the personal affair

that's been on my mind you'll admit it was excusable. Unless something lucky happens, I'm worse than a bankrupt—criminally liable if certain developments follow. I shall know the worst within the next few days. That fellow Sedley, my partner, has proved a rogue—skipped out with ten thousand dollars and left me in a terrible hole. And I can't look for aid from my father so long as—"

"So long as what?"

He hesitated. A strained look of pathos and tenderness crept into his face. He drew his arms closer about her.

"You know, dear," he whispered meaningly. "But not even this shall give him the power to separate us."

She shuddered. That dread had been her companion throughout the past two years, ever since the dispute had arisen in the first six months of their engagement. Hawley's father, Sumner Flint, the district attorney, had been sentimentally anxious to acquire a tract of land which had once belonged to his old homestead. He was about to close the deal, when he was informed that the land had been quietly purchased by Marion's father, the local banker. Though he had attempted to re-purchase it at an advance, his offer had been curtly refused. Within a year Mr. Tempest had opened a granite quarry, which he was now operating at a considerable profit. Since then, the district attorney had been actively opposed to his son's marriage, with the result that it had been continually postponed. Now at last he would have an efficient weapon with which to coerce Hawley. By refusing to lend him the necessary ten thousand unless the engagement was broken, he would give him the choice between honorable freedom and sharing the taint of his partner's responsibility with the possibility of jail in prospect. Marion, realizing this crisis, puzzled her brains to find a road of escape. Sumner Flint was a hard man; there would be no softening. Suddenly a flush of hope came into her eyes. She drew herself away and looked up at Hawley.

"Why, of course! Father's fond of you! He'll help."

A thin smile, half cynical, half pitying, tortured his mouth. He checked it and, with a desperate wave of his hand as though sweeping away every ground for optimism, responded, "He's got a swell chance—" Breaking off short, "No, dear," he continued, "your father can do nothing in this case, unfortunately. Never mind, I'll get along somehow."

He hurried away from her, overcome by the intensity of his emotion.

She watched him as he vanished down the hillside through the grove. The whole day had been unsatisfactory. There was a feeling of mystery abroad, which filled her with a sense of watching eyes and nerve-racking unrest. Thinking over what Hawley had said, one expression stood out ominously—"criminally liable."

Growing nervous because of the emptiness of the house, she huddled in the dusk on the veranda.

Rambling and tree-surrounded, her home, an old colonial mansion, stood half a mile back from the road, far removed from neighbors, on the outskirts of the town.

It was over an hour before she arrived at her decision. Hawley must be saved. She knew what she must do. The chill of the September night wind rustling the shrubbery, seemed to fill the air with whisperings of unseen enemies. Fear and trembling possessed her. Unwillingly she rose and, drawing her shawl about her, entered the house, locking the door carefully behind her.

With hesitating steps she approached the library. It was dark and forbidding. She lit a candle and advanced to a writing table which stood against the tall

French window. The foliage, stirred by the breeze, tapped and tapped on the glass like a warning hand. Seating herself with her back to the night, she proceeded to put her resolution into action.

In a series of broken phrases she penned the fatal letter which meant the shipwreck of her happiness:

"Hawley—my own dearest,

'Criminally liable!' That you should be in danger of arrest, the thought is intolerable! *I* must give *you* up. You are too fine and noble to take the initiative, but it is for your best. I, the weaker, must support you, the stronger. Help me in all mercy. A drawback to you now—what would I not be five years hence? As you love me and in memory of the last few years of strengthening love and ecstasy, I beseech you to pass me out of your life! Look at it as though it were for a time only—that will make it easier to bear. Go to your father with a clear conscience. Tell him the facts about your affairs. Tell him the *truth* about our *permanent* separation. Then he will help you.

Oh my love, I wish that I could write the volumes that are in my soul. But my heart is frozen with dread—tomorrow makes me cower like a threat. I am paralyzed with concern for your safety. I can write no more. Goodnight, beloved, and for our own strength let us make it good-bye.

Marion."

She bent forward, sobbing, burying her face in her hands. Until the letter was written she had not realized what this separation would mean to her. She saw down the road of life, the long agony of the lonely years like milestones blanched in the moonlight. The minutes ticked by unnoticed. Bong! Bong! Bong! The sound reverberated through the house, shattering the intense silence—the clock in the hall was striking the midnight hour.

Her reverie disturbed, Marion wearily raised her head. Staring vacantly into the mirror before her, she was startled by the apparition which she beheld. Reflected midst the blackness of the night without, gazing in upon her from the shrubbery with a look both tragic and furtive, was the face of the lover to whom her letter was addressed. She tottered to her feet, suppressing the involuntary shriek which seemed to strangle her, and turned about. All was black and still. Persuading herself that the visitation was the creation of her overwrought nerves, she laid the letter on the table, picked up the candle and passed up the echoing stairs to her bedroom.

For what seemed hours she lay awake staring at the cold grayness of the ceiling, watching the fantastic panorama of shadows which the moonlight and passing clouds wove into forms of terror.

She was dozing off into feverish unrest, when suddenly the creaking of the floor downstairs made certain the fact that a second presence was there. Overcoming the paralysis of fear which held her, she arose and stealthily groped her way to the bureau where her father's revolver was kept. Its steely iciness, and the knowledge of its power to deal out death intensified her realization of her imminent danger. Grasping it firmly, like a pale ghost she slowly and cautiously glided down the stairs.

The sounds came from her father's library. She reached an angle on the stairway from which, peering over the banisters, she saw silhouetted in the moonlight, the figure of a man kneeling before the safe. It was open.

With the unexpected courage of the desperate, Marion advanced until she stood upon the threshold of the library. A loosened board betrayed her. The intruder started, arose, and turned. His face was hidden in the shadow of his slouched hat, but there was something

oddly familiar in the stoop of his shoulders and in his general carriage. Made speechless by the shock of what she beheld, she tottered against the door. The revolver dropped from her hand. There was a loud report, and then she fell.

A chill wind blowing in through the window revived her. Bewildered, she raised herself on her elbow. As she did so she was made conscious of the fact that a rug had been hastily spread about her as a protection from the cold night air. The newly risen sun, streaming in, disclosed the open safe and brought remembrance of all that had occurred.

Swaying dizzily toward the safe, Marion gathered together and examined the scattered papers. So far as she could determine nothing was missing. She returned them to their proper places and closed the door. About to leave the room, her eye caught sight of her letter of the night before. It lay on the floor where it had been knocked by the burglar in his flight. Upon it was the imprint of a bloody hand. Unquestionably the accidental discharge of the revolver must have wounded him.

Picking it up, she rushed to her bedroom, hastily attired herself, and hid it in the bodice of her dress. Just as her toilet was completed, the house was startled by the violent clamoring of the bell. Stealing timidly to the window, she recognized her father's rig. It was evident from the lather of sweat that the horse had been furiously over-driven.

As she opened the door, Marion laid her hands upon her father's arm and exclaimed: "Oh Dad, I'm so glad you've come back. Terrible things have occurred. Last night the house was—"

Rathbone Tempest swept his daughter violently aside, crowding past her. His face was haggard; the muscles twitched; his shoulders had sunk forward; he was all a-tremble. Frantically he rushed to the library. Terrified, Marion followed. Crouching before the safe just as she had seen that other do, his fingers hurriedly manipulated the combination.

Smashing back the door he drew forth a compartment.

"My God! It's gone!" he shrieked.

Turning furiously on his daughter, he almost shouted, "Has anyone opened this safe?"

In smothered tones she answered, "Yes, Father, I have."

"No! No! I mean has anyone else?"

Marion was inarticulate with apprehension. Before she could make reply Tempest continued: "I've been robbed! Do you hear that? Robbed! There's ten thousand dollars in bonds gone—and that isn't all."

"Oh Father, I am *so* sorry. Perhaps I can help you. Last night the house was—"

"Oh shut up, girl. It isn't the damned money that bothers me, it's that Slawson paper. They got that, too. Flint's got me in his clutches at last, damn him, and just when I was out of the wood."

Marion's hand involuntarily clutched at her breast. There was the rustle of paper—another reminder of the night before. Nauseating horror overcame her and the desolating fear that her worst surmises were correct.

The banker made another hunt for the missing paper. She watched him without interest, recognizing the futility of his search.

A brutal and persistent pounding on the front door brought her father from his knees with a scared expression. All the savage anger which had encrimsoned his face vanished, giving way to the craven's deathly pallor. Turning to Marion, he panted, "They're here! They're here! It's too late to get away now."

Her eyes interrogated him.

With an almost Herculean effort, he pulled himself together. Resuming the

natural poise of the pompous and prosperous banker, the most important man of his town, in a voice perfectly normal, free from any trace of emotion, he responded, "Open the door, Marion, and show the gentlemen in."

On the veranda stood Sumner Flint at almost the identical spot where she had bidden his son good-night. Accompanying him was a plain-clothes man. Within sight were several police officers. She could guess that others were hidden behind the trees around the house.

She confronted him with a smiling countenance, but when her eyes met the steely cruelty of his gaze they flashed back a challenge. Without a word she ushered him into the hall. Her father, having closed the safe, awaited him beside it. Before there was time for the district attorney to be announced, the banker's cheerful voice inquired:

"Rather early in the morning, Flint, to pay a call—isn't it?"

Marion noted that her father's presence seemed to arouse all the latent antagonism in the district attorney's make-up. In spiteful sarcasm he responded: "It's the early bird, you know, Tempest—and I guess you're the worm that's caught this time."

Producing a legal document, he presented it to his enemy.

"It's really a pleasure to give you this. You'll note it's a warrant for your arrest for the misappropriation of other people's money."

Rathbone Tempest paled slightly. Marion shivered. Flint's deputy sniggered diplomatically. The district attorney smiled his self-satisfaction.

Turning to his deputy, he resumed:

"Mulligan, you'd better get busy with that search-warrant now. You see, Tempest, we have an idea that perhaps a certain Slawson paper may be found somewhere in your immediate vicinity."

Facing his enemy with a bullying insolence, he added, handing him the search-warrant document:

"I'm sure you'll not deny us the privilege of examining your safe. Doubtless there's a lot in it that don't belong to you, but we won't touch that just now! All we want is that Slawson paper."

The bank president tottered, then braced himself against a chair for support. His face betrayed blank bewilderment. So Flint had not got that paper after all! Then who had?

The safe opened, Deputy Mulligan rifled its contents, and after an industrious search announced to his chief, "There ain't no Slawson paper here."

"I'll have a look for myself," snapped Flint. Tempest, now thoroughly self-possessed, chuckled his amusement. "Better give it up. There never was such a paper to my knowledge. I don't even know what you're talking about."

"You don't, eh? Well, we thought we'd give you a little surprise. The paper's here all right; you had to keep it to protect yourself. You can't fool us; we know everything. Slawson's 'blown' the whole transaction."

Marion noticed a slight twitching about her father's mouth, which betrayed to her the truth of what was said. While a search was made of the entire house, she listened apprehensively to what followed.

"It's a bad game for a bank president to gamble with his depositors' money, and that's what Slawson swears you did. It will probably go easier with you if you turn over the paper, plead guilty, and save us a lot of trouble and expense. Fact is, I'll do my best for you along this line—get you a suspended sentence, perhaps, or at least only a short term. Come now, what do you say?"

Tempest's shrewd eyes narrowed. Last night, when he had received warning of the raid that had been planned, he had at once set out, driving headlong through the darkness, that he might get home

undetected before the officers arrived and destroy the damning proof of his successful criminality. When he found that the safe, of which only he and Marion knew the combination, had been rifled in his absence, he had given up all hope of saving himself. He realized now that, for the present at least, his was the upper hand; in some way, quite undeserved and inexplicable, the fates had favored him. For the first time in his encounter with Flint, he manifested anger.

"You can't bulldoze me," he shouted. "Slawson's in Queer Street, and you've got the 'high sign' on him, that's all. Whatever evidence you've got out of him is manufactured at your suggestion! He can't produce a single written line to prove it. It's a put-up job and the books of the bank will prove it. They're open to inspection and will stand any test."

"We'll see," was the district attorney's only comment.

Turning to the deputy, in biting tones he said, "Place him under arrest."

Marion accompanied her father and the party to the court, where he was arraigned and held, awaiting bail. As he was being conducted from the court to the county jail they encountered Hawley Flint. He approached the accused banker to express his sympathy and support. His fear that the attitude of the district attorney might endanger his prospects with Marion, was quickly dispelled by the heartiness of Mr. Tempest's handshake.

While this brief conversation was taking place, Marion gazed intently at her lover's right hand. It hung in a sling and was wrapped in lint. He explained casually that the accident was slight and had occurred in cranking up the automobile. As her father passed on, she beckoned Hawley aside.

His frank manner left him. His eyes shifted awkwardly, avoiding her gaze. His expression was the same, at once tragic and furtive, as that of the face she had seen in the mirror.

She was determined not to be first to speak. The proof of his guilt, which she had striven not to accept, was now most utterly complete. He himself had told her that his criminal indebtedness amounted to ten thousand dollars—the exact sum missing; and now his hand was wounded.

Before they had opportunity for conversation, a messenger arrived saying that the district attorney required his instant presence. Drawing forth the blood-smirched letter, Marion handed it to him saying: "I found this on the library floor this morning, when I recovered. You'll understand. Good-bye."

He was immediately aware of the altered coldness of her voice, and was about to enter into further explanations when he realized the danger of going into details just then. Crunching the letter into his pocket unread, he bent over to her and whispered hurriedly, "It's needless to repeat what I have already said to your father. I'm with him to the finish and he's bound to win out. But don't discuss anything with anybody, not even with him. Just wait a short time and everything will be all right. You can depend on that. Remember—complete, absolute silence is imperative."

Three hours later Rathbone Tempest was out on bail, which some of the leading merchants of the town, believing implicitly in his integrity, had furnished. Knowledge of the family feud, which existed between the district attorney and the banker, was common property; public feeling ran high in the latter's favor.

Once in the privacy of their home, Marion confronted her father. "Say that it's false," she pleaded. "I've heard you deny it to the others; but, oh Father, won't you tell me that it isn't true?"

He paid her scant attention. Still be-

wildered as to what had become of both the bonds and the Slawson document, he was making a hurried search through his desk.

"That what isn't true?" he asked sharply .

"That you used the bank's money for your personal speculations."

A glad exclamation was the only answer as he settled back in his chair.

"Well, I have been a fool," he ejaculated. "The bonds were here in my private desk all the time. I remember now that I overlooked transferring them to the new safe."

In her eagerness she ran forward and, half-sobbing, cried impetuously, "Then he didn't steal them after all. He didn't take them."

The banker turned on her, puzzled and suspicious. "I don't understand you, my girl. What are you talking about?"

In the nick of time she remembered Hawley's admonition that she should keep quiet, even with her father, and all would be well.

Curbing her agitation she finished tamely, "Why, you yourself said that you'd been robbed when you found them missing this morning."

"Oh, I see; I see," he muttered, absentmindedly. "Now Marion, dear, you'd better run away and leave me to myself for a spell."

She was glad to go despite her anxiety to learn how much of truth there was in the accusation. She realized that in his presence she was in continual danger of betraying her knowledge of the burglary. For his part he was glad that she should go, for he was unwilling that his daughter should witness his frenzied search for the elusive document. Despite the energetic hours spent in the quest, he was finally compelled to admit his failure.

That evening the news came out that Sedley, Hawley Flint's runaway partner, had been traced to New York and captured, with ten thousand dollars on him, just as he was boarding the Lusitania.

A month later, Rathbone Tempest, accompanied by his daughter, presented himself at the district attorney's offices, prior to his examination before the grand jury. Flint, lacking the confidence which he outwardly displayed, summoned the bank president for a secret conference in his private office. Marion waited outside.

Already he had grave reasons to regret his precipitance. The bank, under the most rigid examination, had been found to be established and conducted on an absolutely sound basis. Whatever might have happened in the immediate past, no shadow or trace of anything illegal was to be discovered in its records. The prominent merchants and politicians of the town, who, from the outset, had condemned the district attorney's action because they feared a local panic, now boldly accused him of using his public office for purposes of private revenge. Flint knew that only one thing could justify him and avert the rising storm of popular indignation,—the missing paper,—which would bear out the verbal testimony of the prosecution's leading witness, Slawson. His hope was that, in secret conference, the defendant might be induced, wittingly or by some slip of the the tongue, to betray its whereabouts.

Their talk had hardly commenced when, without warning, the door from the general offices quietly opened. Both men, their nerves already being at the highest tension, turned savagely. Into the room stepped Hawley, coaxing after him by the hand, Marion, who had not spoken to him since she had given him the letter. Her face was flushed with bewildered protest. His father, with an irritable gesture, signalled to him to withdraw himself, and resumed his con-

versation with Tempest, taking it for granted that he was already obeyed.

Ignoring the command, the young man closed the door behind him and placed his back against it. In a low voice, intense with emotion, he addressed himself to the district attorney.

"Father, this case can't go on. You'll never get that document."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I stole it."

Both men started from their chairs. Marion shrank back to the wall trembling.

With clenched, threatening fists, the district attorney strode toward his son.

"A likely story, you young villian! You must be crazy."

"Oh, no, I'm not! I can prove it. Look here!"

With a few rapid twists he unbound the injured hand. Thrusting it before them, revealing a hole through the palm, he exclaimed, "That wasn't done by an auto. How could it be? It was a bullet fired by Marion."

Both fathers turned to the pale girl, expecting passionate denial. To their amazement, with averted eyes and evident reluctance, she retold the story of her opening of the safe in the presence of Hawley, the face in the mirror, the robbery, and its sequence.

"And it's all true," confirmed Hawley. "I overheard your plans, Father, and wanted to warn Mr. Tempest, both for his own and for Marion's sake. I delayed, hesitating because of the disloyalty to you. When I did make up my mind, and went round, I found that Mr. Tempest had gone away overnight. I tried to tell Marion, and couldn't. Then I—"

"You'll give me that Slawson paper at once or I'll know the reason why," stormed Flint, losing control of himself and attempting to drag his son from before the door that he might turn the key, so preventing his escape.

"I can't, it's destroyed," Hawley answered quietly. "I was burning it while you were hunting for it in Mr. Tempest's house. You can't prove by me that there was anything compromising in it, nor even that such a document ever existed."

The district attorney sank back into his chair, defeated and spent. The banker sighed his relief and smiled.

The silence was broken by Marion. Crossing the room to where Hawley was standing, she halted with her hands stretched out in entreaty. When she spoke, there was a sob in her voice.

"Did you read my letter?"

He nodded.

"Please, oh please, give it back to me."

"Why?"

"I never ought to have sent it."

"You—you mean?" he stammered.

By now she was crying. "I don't know what I mean. I've been wicked, but I'm more sorry than I can tell."

His arms went about her. While she hid her face against him, he stooped and kissed her hair.

The 'phone rang. Dragging himself wearily towards it, the district attorney took up the receiver.

"Oh, the Tempest case! No. *No,* I tell you. I won't be present. Jenkins, you take care of that. It's dropped. Insufficient evidence."

The Thief of Flags

BY EDWARD BOLTWOOD

The grave of a little town's Civil War hero is mysteriously profaned every Memorial Day. The author tells how, as a boy, he successfully attempted the discovery of the vandal, who took this means to revenge a wrong that had seared his conscience for forty years.

IN the pleasant village cemetery of Highdale, the grave of Captain Zenas Warren is on a secluded crest of ground behind a clump of hemlocks; and in the ambush of these scrubby trees I lay stretched one summer evening, twenty years ago, with my childish heart beating a tattoo against my ribs.

The life of a country doctor has since led me to strange happenings, but that night sticks in my memory like yesterday —the creepy hush of it, the whispering drizzle of the rain, and the square, gray monument, looming beyond the foliage.

In memory of
CAPT. ZENAS WARREN
Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry,
who fell in Louisiana, June 10, 1863,
and is buried beneath this stone.
Highdale Honors Her Brave.

Capt. Warren's company had been recruited in Highdale, and had marched out of our valley to the war. A week before my nocturnal expedition to the cemetery, I had seen the dozen grizzled survivors of his command gather at their captain's grave, paying it the honors of Memorial Day. My father, Ephraim Morey, was one of them, and so was Quincy Vail, the postmaster, and old Sol Draper. When my father planted a little flag beside the monument, the bystanders drew a solemn breath and stared at the bunting in a sort of frightened ecstasy, and the reason brings me to the reason of my ambuscade behind the hemlocks. It was this: Everybody in Highdale knew that the flag would soon disappear mysteriously from Capt. Warren's grave.

Year by year the desecration had been done; in vain was the offer of a reward; the despoiler of the flag would wait with infinite craft and patience, and some night or other he would strip it off.

Now, my determination to try to witness this vandalism had been born in the warmth of my bed, and I had nursed it with only moderate success while sliding from our wood-shed roof and posting to the church-yard. When I straddled the cemetery wall, however, the resolution sickened; and it became absolutely moribund when the rain swelled from a sprinkling shower to a hard and steady downpour.

Had I stopped to think, I must have realized that the rain was exactly to my purpose. In a driving storm, the thief of the flag would be unlikely to suspect a spy. Suddenly I was aware of a skulking figure among the hemlocks.

It looked more ghost than human, with a great cape tossing about its head. I hugged the ground in terror, and my breathing sounded as loud to me as the midnight strokes of the church clock. But the creature's examination disclosed nothing to him; he entered the shrubbery and plumped down, kneeling, upon the grave. My eyelids seemed to click as I opened them wide, to see that the man was old Quincy Vail.

He appeared, for a few moments, to be

praying. Then, abruptly, he sprang to his feet, muttered a sentence which ended fiercely in an oath, whipped up the flag with such a violent grip that the stick of it cracked in his hands, and disappeared into the wet night, with the cape of his faded army overcoat flapping behind him, like the wings of an evil bird.

My twelve-year-old heart turned to a jelly. I rushed home and shook between the blankets until sunrise. Too frightened ever to tell anybody, I was always in fear of Quincy Vail, and for a long time I went for our letters in the greatest imaginable terror.

The postmaster lived alone in a narrow room behind his office. He was a man of education; before he enlisted, in '62, he taught the school at Highdale. My mother used to describe him as he was in those days—something of a village Hamlet, melancholy, pale, and silent. His only friend was young Zenas Warren, my mother's distant cousin, whose last resting place I had seen him so profanely outrage; and the schoolmaster was by his captain's side when Warren fell in the southern country. Quincy Vail, as I knew him,—saving for that one night in the graveyard,—was a mild and feeble recluse, and a notably devout professor at the meeting house on Sundays.

One winter's morning, years after I had become a physician in an adjoining town, Sol Draper's youngest son drove over from Highdale with the news that old Vail had been found dead on his office floor. I bundled into the sleigh and we set forth.

"Some says p'ison, Dr. Morey," remarked Draper, "an' some says appleplexy. I says 'twas mos' likely the two on 'em."

The Highdale habit is to be on both sides of a question, if possible.

It needed little more than a glance to convince me that poor Vail's death had been a perfectly natural one, induced by some simple shock. The old soldier had been seized by heart failure at his duty, in the act of sorting the mail. The scene was dreary—the letters scattered over the grimy office, the cold ashes in the grate, the overturned inkstand, with its black pool staining the postmaster's hair.

Vail's arm was doubled beneath his back, and from his stiff hand I took a bulky envelope. It bore Mexican stamps, and the superscription: "To the kin of Capt. Zenas Warren, at Highdale, Mass." No kinsman of Warren, excepting myself, remained in the country. I read the manuscript that night, by my study fire; and this is the story of Quincy Vail, reconstructed from Ben Welch's letter out of Mexico, which undoubtedly brought Vail to his death.

It does not matter who this Ben Welch might have been. Welch was not the vagabond's rightful name. He drifted to Highdale in the fall of '62, and for a bounty enlisted in the company under Capt. Warren, encamped for drill in Morey's Hollow. One day he was policing near the captain's tent, when a white-faced slip of a youth spoke to Warren.

"Zenas," said he, "I have spent the night praying and thinking, and I have decided that it is my duty to go with you."

Warren, a handsome, stalwart fellow, stared a moment, and then roared with laughter.

"Quincy Vail a soldier!" he cried. "Get back to your spelling classes, Quincy. This is man's work."

"I think that Agnes would be pleased if I went," said Vail.

"Oh, is that it?" snapped out the captain. "Well, you have no concern, any more, with her likes and her dislikes, Quincy."

"I know that," said the other quietly, "but I mean to do all I can, for her sake, in spite of what has happened."

Vail enlisted and, curiously enough, fell into the close companionship of Welch. There must have been a strange contrast between the two recruits—the shifty jail-bird and the timid, Puritan schoolmaster. When the company marched off to join the regiment, Vail and Welch were elbow to elbow in the second set of fours. On the village green, the selectmen gave Warren a sword, and Agnes Campbell, on behalf of the Highdale ladies, presented to the captain a revolver. She did not manage to speak to Quincy, hidden in the ranks.

The regiment was sent with Banks' expedition to the Gulf. In their first flurry of a picket skirmish before Port Hudson, Welch found Vail staggering in a daze behind the firing-line.

"Are you hit?" yelled Welch.

"No," moaned Quincy, "but, Ben, I cannot shoot—I cannot kill!"

"Shoot, then, and it's a thousand to one you kill nobody!" chuckled Welch, for Vail's hands were shaking like leaves.

But Vail only dragged his musket and muttered in sing-song fashion, "I cannot do it, I cannot do it."

Welch thought that his friend was redeeming himself during the next action, which was a far more serious affair, wherein a storming party moved under fire across an ugly quarter-mile of felled timber. In the fore-front ran Vail, leaping over the logs and exposing himself with the most reckless daring. But when the assault had been repulsed, and the company was formed for roll call, Vail was white and trembling.

"I am dying of the horror of it, Ben," he whispered.

Zenas Warren strode along the line. The cleanliness of Vail's gun attracted his attention. He seized the barrel and peered into it. The piece had not been discharged.

"You sneaking, shirking coward!" said the captain, slowly and distinctly; and after roll call Vail fainted and was carried to his tent by Ben Welch.

Warren watched with a smile on his lips. Perhaps he was thinking how the stories of Vail's temperamental weakness would sound in the ears of Agnes Campbell. At any rate, he took pains to make notorious the fact that Vail sickened at the thought of blood-letting. One instance of his purposeful tyranny will suffice. A team of six horses broke through a corduroy road and floundered inextricably in the bottomless mud. Their thrashing struggles prevented the men from clearing the obstruction.

"Send for Private Vail," said Warren. "Vail needs gunnery practise."

Whereupon he ordered Vail to kill the screaming, helpless animals. For fifteen minutes the poor fellow stood, shooting down the horses, and at the end he was like a rag.

The following week saw the company on outpost duty near a deserted plantation, which was the suspected rendezvous of Confederate guerillas; and on the night of June 10th, Warren detailed Welch and Vail to scout with him through this place.

The moon shone, but a mist enveloped the three men when they left the bayou path and struck into a swamp. Their way was perilous, and they moved warily, with Warren leading. In this order, they reached the edge of a narrow clearing, which rose like an island in the marsh. A gigantic oak tree loomed in the middle of it, hung with spectral moss. The captain halted behind a swamp bush and dropped to his knees.

When Welch came up, he saw two figures under the oak. One was that of an old man in a Confederate uniform, who labored with a spade in the ground, and the second was a tall, gaunt-framed woman, who held a rifle poised, ready at her hip.

"Shoot 'em down!" hissed Warren.

"In uniform and under arms. You take the man, Welch. You, Vail, the other."

Welch aimed his gun.

"'Tis a woman," moaned Vail.

"Obey orders, you fool!" and the captain's pistol clicked.

"Zenas—you won't make me do this—put this on my soul—"

"Shoot!" broke in Warren, with a string of curses.

Ben Welch's piece missed fire, but not so Vail's. The woman wheeled and fell, with a horrid outcry. The old man dashed out of sight into the thicket. Welch saw that two scarlet spots blazed in Vail's cheeks and that he bit another cartridge and drove it home. The trio plodded forward to the clearing.

"What was this digging business?" asked Warren. "The old cat is dead as nails."

Welch peered down greedily into the narrow hole, at once suspecting buried treasure. As he bent over, he had a dim impression of seeing Warren trying to turn over the woman's body with the toe of his boot. To this act, he naturally attached no importance, either then or afterwards, although it probably put the final twist to Quincy Vail's tormented nerves and distorted mind. For, while Welch was busy at the excavation, a shot cracked close by his ear. He dodged for cover to the tree, and there lay Captain Warren, in a convulsion of great heaving gasps.

"Where are they, Quin?" shouted Welch.

"Who?"

"The Rebs! Did you see the powder flash?"

From the shelter of the oak, Welch stared cautiously about. He saw Vail standing as if at attention, with his smoking gun.

"Zenas Warren is killed," said he. "I killed him."

"And serve the cowardly bully right!" cried Welch. "You done right, blast him!"

"I have committed the black sin twice, Ben Welch," said the schoolmaster. "I am lost forever in the sight of Heaven."

It is evident that Welch was not a novice in such emergencies. He immediately proposed to Vail that, with the abandoned spade, they dig up the loot and then and there desert. Vail would have none of this, and Welch seems to have been afraid of him, for the will of this new-made Cain was, beyond doubt, infinitely the stronger. It compelled the other to a strange deed.

One has a picture of the two men at their grim work in the mist of that Louisiana swamp. They enlarged the hole until Welch actually saw parcels of plate and bags bulging with coin. But Vail was inexorable, and nothing was touched. They laid the body of the woman among the treasure.

It remained to carry the captain's body to the camp, rehearsing on their way the story of an ambuscade by guerillas, which Welch devised and recounted as witness-in-chief at the hurried official inquiry concerning the affair. His object was not so much to screen Vail as to obtain the valuables. Welch took the first chance to desert and to seek the tree in the swamp. He was late. The place had been cleared of everything that was buried there, and a rude cross, carved on the oak, signified that this had been the act of friends.

Welch drifted on to Mexico. In what spirit of penitence he sent the confession, one must conjecture; a priest was with him when he wrote it.

But this was the penance of Quincy Vail: To endure the sting of his Puritan conscience for forty years of a gray, dull life in a New England valley, and to honor outwardly the memory of the village hero and his victim.

On last Memorial Day, the veterans

of Highdale placed a flag beside Vail's simple headstone.

"Cur'ous thing," observed old Sol Draper, "how the cap'n's marker's been let be lately. Maybe 'twas a poor, crazy feller, p'rhaps. Then again, maybe it warn't. 'Pears like he thought the flag meant a lot, anyhow. Beats all!"

Old Sol gazed reflectively across at the knoll where Warren lay. A placid breeze whispered through the pines, and the two graves were very peaceful.

Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

A fellow used to go to a dancing school to learn the steps. Nowadays he goes to learn the holds.

You may have noticed that a bald-headed man never has any trouble growing a fine crop of hair in his ears.

The old-fashioned girl who was vaccinated on the calf so the scar wouldn't be visible, now has a daughter who realizes that there's no place left but the soles of her feet.

When a girl is well developed across the chest she always forgets to fasten four or five of the top buttons on her waist.

Judging from the kind of whiskers they wear, lots of men must have been awfully homely when they were kids.

You may have noticed that we never put off until tomorrow the things we shouldn't do today.

A woman who has a no-count, ornery husband would gladly trade him for a plugged dime. But if an automobile hits him his price goes up to $100,000.

A country girl envies her cousin in the big city because the city girl can see "Little Women" in the afternoon and "Damaged Goods" the same night.

The reason a man gets mad when one of his socks come down is because he doesn't have to wrestle with a hip length stocking with a half yard of busted corset garter attached.

If there were ten men in a room, and the window on one side gave a view of a girl changing her waist and the window on the other side gave a view of a parade, there would be ten men in town who would miss seeing the parade.

The reason a woman likes to go out in the snow in a cheese cloth skirt and a waist opened as far down as the solar plexus is because her muff keeps her hands warm.

You can't tell what a woman is going to do next. Twenty years ago she wore a bustle to hide her curves and now she won't wear petticoats for fear you might not see her curves.

Nature is a mean old cuss. Half the girls are buying bust developer and the other half are taking anti-fat.

The suffragettes claim men contribute nothing to the home but money. But the suffs can't fool the stork with that line of talk.

And while the highbrows are educating the world up to eugenics, they might take the fool stork off to one side and make him quit delivering packages after he has visited the same home four or five times.

This is the time of year when a man can put on $168 worth of clothes and go out and get pneumonia from exposure, and a girl can go out wearing a sash curtain and smile and come home with hives and prickly heat.

When dinner began with prayer instead of cocktails there wasn't much of a holler about the High Cost of Living.

A man will yawn and read his program when the stage is filled with Amazons in tights. But he gets awfully excited if he gets a flash at a well-filled stocking on the street.

In these days of steam heat and hot air furnaces a kid imagines you are talking about a slipper when you mention a base burner.

Boots!

BY HAROLD de POLO

Here's a smashing, dramatic account of a battle of wits between a "bad man" and the sheriff of Sunset Canyon. Running down his quarry the sheriff is almost "done," but turns the table and gets his man with his own trick.

HE young sheriff of Sunset Canyon twitched his stiff body, opened his eyes wide, and came to a sitting posture with a sudden jerk, his hand instinctively shooting down to the gun at his right hip. He blinked his eyes, looked sharply about him at the world that still slept under a canopy of stars, and then laughed a short, sheepish little laugh.

"Lord," he muttered, shaking his head slowly, "but this thing is gettin' on muh nerves. Huh, jest dreamed I'd caught Logan. Phew! It shore seemed real, though!" Again he laughed to himself, this time amusedly.

Then he stretched his aching limbs, cold from the night he had spent in the open, and yawned lengthily. He tossed his blanket from him and methodically folded it, and, after smoothing out the one he had used for a pillow, placed them both together. He rose, brushed back his tousled hair, and once more scanned the steep side of the deep ravine just opposite him—the side that sheltered, somewhere, the outlaw of whom he was in quest.

Again he spoke to himself, a habit of those who have passed much time alone in the open. "Well, muh boy, I guess we'd better git up an' git the jump on Bill Logan, eh? Say, I hope our ole cayuse is all right down the other side o' this leetle hill. Sorry we couldn't bring him along, but he might a' let Logan know we were here! Lord, I wish I could take a chance on makin' some coffee, I—Aw, keep still, m'son, yuh on'y make yuh mouth water! Water? Huh, reckon we'll have some o' that, inside *an'* outside!"

Carefully hiding his blankets in a thick, thorny bush, he walked up the steep hill to the little spring that he had found there yesterday. Once there, he drank his fill of water, eating two hard, round biscuits for his breakfast as he did so; then, the inner man being satisfied, he washed his face and hands with the icy water in a way that told he enjoyed it immensely. After this task was done, he extracted the blue-steel revolver from his right hip pocket, saw that every chamber was filled, and proceeded to pick his way, silently and so that he could not be seen from the other side of the gully, down to the bottom of it.

Just five days, now, the sheriff of Sunset Canyon had been on the hunt for Logan, known as the worst and most "wanted" man in the State of Arizona, and the hunt had told on him. His face, brown and naturally lean, was now a trifle white, and drawn so that his cheek-bones seemed as if they would break through his skin at any moment. His eyes, too, were blood-shot and bulging, telling of the little sleep he had had, while there was a constant, nervous twitching of his slim, deft fingers. For the capture of Bill Logan meant a great deal to him. It meant a thousand dollars reward that would enable him to buy a

homestead for a certain blue-eyed, fair-haired girl back in Sunset Canyon. Also it meant another notch in his already excellent reputation.

Five days ago, when he had heard that the outlaw was known to be in the vicinity of Dead Man's Gully, he had ridden his buckskin on a slow lope over the undulating prairie, saving up most of his animal's strength for the two days' trip over the desert that was so hot that there might have been a raging furnace constantly burning somewhere underneath it. After those two hard days he had come to the ravine between the mountains where the outlaw was rumored to go when the law became too hot for him. He had left his horse tethered at the base of it, with his long rope, close to a cool spring. All day yesterday he had searched both sides of the deep gully for his quarry, but he had found nothing more than a few footprints that apparently told of the bad man being on the side opposite from the one on which he himself had slept. That had made him feel hopeful; for if there was a sheriff known as being able to get his man, Langdon was the one. And now, with new hope in his heart, he started out on his fifth day before even the dawn had arrived.

Now, as he climbed down the steep descent, his haggard face was alert, his eyes, gray and usually wide, were narrowed to mere slits, and his dexterous right hand held his big revolver before him, set for instant action, while his left hand rested on the weapon on his other hip, ready to snatch that one should anything go wrong with the other. Very slowly, as he walked noiselessly about, the stars left the heavens and gave place to a chill, gray, somber dawn. But the sheriff did not like this; he thought he stood a better chance of coming on his man while the other was still sleeping soundly, not suspecting his pursuer's closeness.

Presently Langdon came to the bottom of Dead Man's Gully, and here he searched about for some trace of his quarry. After travelling along the ravine for the space of a quarter of a mile or so, he found what he wanted: several large footprints that looked surprisingly fresh in the soft earth. He smiled with a little sigh, hoping that they might lead him to his man's lair. Then, pulling up his open-topped jack boots, he squared his shoulders and breasted the steep ascent.

His every action, as he went through the dense woods, showed him to be a man who decidedly knew what he was doing. He moved through the undergrowth and over brittle leaves and twigs with the lithe, easy grace of a cat, not making the slightest noise. His eyes, as he walked, took in every single thing that it was possible for man to see.

Suddenly he came to a spot on the hillside, some fifty feet in diameter, that nature had for some reason left quite barren, and his heart went high in his throat and pounded like a trip hammer, used to surprises though he was. Never had it occurred to him that his task would be so easy. There, close to the other edge of the bare place, he saw the cold ashes of a fire; and near them, sticking from a thick, dense growth of underbrush, *were a pair of boots!*

Again the sheriff went back to the habit in which he indulged when alone, only his voice now was little above the lowest whisper. "Say, m'son—say! I reckon we win out today, eh? Well, well, I kinda think it's due us after the time we've put in,—what? But it shore is easy; it shore is! Well, well, Bill Logan, yuh oughtu wake up earlier in the mornin' or else pull yuh feet in after yuh when yuh go to sleep! Ha, ha, ha!"

Then, his jaw out-thrust, his eyes centred, his gun before him, he very slowly and silently made his way across the little cleared space until he came to

the bush from which he could see only his quarry's boots protruding.

"Put up yer han's, Bill Logan," he cried, at the same time making a grab for one of the boots.

But, as he grasped it, he suddenly fell back as it gave way with him. Then he realized how cleverly he had been fooled. At the same time, somewhere from the woods opposite him, a harsh, mocking laugh broke out. "Thought yuh had me, eh, sonny? Why, yuh measly, stinkin' maverick, yuh! D'yuh think yuh kin git Bill Logan as easy as that? Ha, ha, put up *yore* han's, muh frien', an' kin'ly drop that leetle shooter when yuh do! Ha, ha, I kinda reckoned as how them boots 'ud fool yuh!"

Langdon's brain worked quickly. He had certainly been neatly fooled; but to give himself over to the outlaw was quite out of the question. It would mean death, nothing less. He thought of the blue-eyed girl in Sunset Canyon, of his hopes, of everything. Then he decided. He scanned the woods closely with his sharp eyes. Finally he thought he saw a form; and without waiting an instant, he leveled his gun and fired.

Almost simultaneously, though, there was another report, followed by an angry, roaring oath.

The young sheriff, for a moment, seemed turned to stone. Then a spasmodic shiver ran through his body, his hands went high in the air as his gun flew far to the side, he twirled round a few times, and finally plunged headlong, in the way a dead man does, straight into the bush where he had thought the outlaw had been sleeping. And, to add a touch of irony to the scene, his own boots, now, were the only part of him that was visible—his own boots that were sticking out in the exact way that the outlaw's had been not five minutes previously.

From the other side of the clearing stepped Bill Logan, a nasty, triumphant leer on his ugly, black-bearded face.

"Huh, reckon I got muh man this time, b'Gawd! Ha, ha; can't fool ole Bill Logan, they can't! Huh, not so's yu'd notice it! Ha, ha, guess I sent him down where he belongs, damn him!" And, still leering wickedly, he walked arrogantly over toward the bush from which the boots were protruding.

He, too, when he arrived there, bent down to grasp the foot of his man; but, before he could touch it, a spurt of red flame shot out from a tree not twenty feet from him and a bullet tore through his "gun hand," causing him to drop his weapon with a howl of maddened pain.

Then, on the instant, the tall, well-built, smiling form of the man whom he thought he had killed stepped out from behind his shelter, in his stocking feet, with a smoking gun in his hand that was pointed directly at the bad man's breast.

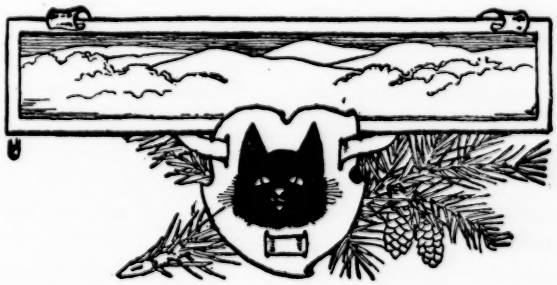
"Put up *yore* han's, Mister William Logan, if yu'll be so kin'! Ha, ha! Here, now, none o' that, sonny! The *secon'* time I play with muh trigger I allus make a point o' killing. Do I make muself plain?"

The outlaw, for a brief instant, made as if he would spring upon his captor. But then, as he cast his eyes reflectively over the tall, calm, young man before him, he thought better of it; for there was a certain aspect to those wide gray eyes and revolver barrel that told him that it would be folly to take such a chance. So he very sullenly did as he had been ordered.

The young sheriff from Sunset Canyon took the handcuffs from his hip pocket and walked nonchalantly forward. "Yuh know," he drawled, as if speaking to the world at large, "I kinda remember readin' somewhere, when I was a kid, about catchin' a thief with his own weapons! But say," he smiled chidingly, "yuh

really hadn't oughter bit like that on yuh own game,—honest yuh oughtn't!" His voice became mockingly serious. "But, yuh know, Bill, I'm kinda glad yuh did, fer I tell yuh I had to do some mighty tall thinkin' there when that bullet whizzed by me, an' I sure am glad I had muh jack boots on! But say, if it's jest the same tu yuh, frien', I reckon we'd better be gettin' started. Long trip back, all right. Come on!" And he walked forward and slipped the handcuffs over the protesting wrists.

Then he threw back his head and laughed. "Lord, but *ain't* that a good one on me! Why, I was goin' off without muh nice, good, kin', gentle, leetle booties, ha, ha, ha!"



A Recipe of the Chef's

BY CARL S. HANSEN

Hiccoughs are always annoying—sometimes embarrassing but here is a case of a protracted attack that was alarmingly dangerous. Can you imagine yourself seized with hiccoughs, a glittering stiletto pointed at your throat and a threat to plunge it home at the next hiccough? That is the situation a young man found himself in, on a lonely mountain pass in Italy.

FRAZIER was on the verge of collapse. He had had another attack of hiccough. This one had lasted for sixteen hours. He was on a pokey stage coach in the dusty Apennines bound for Monte Cimone, and what was worse, he was its only passenger. He could get no aid.

Far up a lonely mountain, however, a huge party, mostly of the lower classes, poured into the coach. The rougher ones cast sordid glances at Frazier; and one, a huge lank fellow, with ringed ears and long nose that bent over his lips, grimaced and said: "Pooh! A drunken Americano! Ugo will cut off its ears." He drew a great knife, stabbed a cheese, and created admiration, repeating, "Yes, Ugo, he will slice its liver to little bits."

But among the party was a better dressed man, with a haughty air of command, a handsome gray goatee, and penetrating eye. And beside him sat a girl with refined features and a merry smile.

"Father," said the girl, and her smile went out suddenly, "that young gentleman in the corner seems very ill."

Indeed Frazier was more than ill—he was seriously ill.

She poured out some wine and brought it to him herself.

Frazier was grateful—he was almost gone.

"Hiccough?" asked the father, eyeing Frazier keenly. "I wish on my soul we had some medicine. You are with some one? You are expected by some one?"

"No," answered Frazier dully, "I am utterly alone. I had been studying at Milan. And no one knows I am in these mountains."

"Ah! Ah!" mused the man with the air of command, and he glanced at the rest. "Alone! And no one expects you? Corona, have you not some sal volatile?"

She found it quickly enough, but its ten or twelve drops did no good.

"Strange, strange," muttered her father. "And you are alone. No one even knows you are here. You must try to control it."

"I can't," gasped Frazier. "It's pathological."

"I think I understand. But perhaps if you could get mastery once—like stammering—it might go."

"I have had it too often for that," groaned Frazier, "so often that I would give thousands—yes, tens of thousands, almost, to be rid of it."

Ill though he was, Frazier regretted that look of sudden interest that thrilled through the coach. Ugo, knife in hands over the cheese, stopped grimacing; his thin lips withdrew under his searching nose.

The well dressed stranger studied Frazier closely. He bit the ends of his gloves thoughtfully.

"Then it is no ordinary case, eh?" he asked. "You must have had consider-

able aid—to be so rich—so very rich."

"Hush, Father!" exclaimed the girl, and her eyes were troubled. "My good young man," she warned Frazier, "be careful how you speak of money traveling in Italy. You never know," she added earnestly," whom you may be with in a stage coach."

"You are right," hiccoughed Frazier. "I belive you—still have some of the old banditti. And that fellow opposite—with the earrings and long knife—he might easily pass—for some famous bully—or highwayman—hic—hic—"

Corona turned her face away.

"Oh, he is really harmless, I assure you," remarked her father carelessly; "quite harmless."

"Never," gasped Frazier. "That knife—that look—that gesture!" And involuntarily he shivered.

"Your nerves are unstrung," said the imperious stranger. "What, you, young, rich, alone, ready to fear him as a leader of the banditti? Come," he cried suddenly as if struck by an idea. "I must speak to this famous Ugo for you!"

He leaned forward, but the girl checked him.

"Don't Father," she urged. "Don't!"

"Corona," he frowned slightly, "never interfere in my profession. Did you not hear him say he was alone?"

Frazier had another paroxysm; he was moist outwardly, dry inwardly, and his mind almost a blank. Yet he was conscious of whispers and words buzzing about Ugo. But Ugo never moved; he continued to slice cheese; his great legs stretched out before him; only his half-shut eyes wandered over to Frazier and drank him in calmly.

As the coach toiled up the ochre roads to lonelier passes the party cast aside their almost shy reserve of farther back. They forced a noisy gayety. They shook the coach. A few tried to sing, but gave it up and eyed Frazier balefully. Evidently the noises in the throat of this very rich young American disturbed them.

Suddenly Ugo thrust out a huge fist and struck Frazier on the chest.

"Stop it!" he roared with a terrible grimace. "Stop it! You annoy Ugo and his band. Else Ugo will slice your heart to bits. See?" And Ugo ferociously rubbed his knife along his forefinger by way of illustration.

A blow at any other time would have aroused Frazier to instant retaliation, but now he was nearly in a state of coma.

"You bully!" he managed to gasp, "You are trying to pick a quarrel."

"Stop it!" vociferated Ugo, "or Ugo will carve your liver up and down—so!" And he cut the air with his bright steel. "You are a drunken pig—you are spoiling our pleasure. Ugo will leave you for dead—on the road."

The pretty girl sighed. She watched Frazier apprehensively; she stole an anxious glance at her father, who plucked his goatee and eyed Frazier as a cat eyes a mouse.

Frazier went on hiccoughing, and Ugo laid down his cheese in determination. Up Ugo reared to his lank height, knife cutting the air.

"Did I not tell you to stop?" he cried. "Now Ugo will have your kidneys, yes, your kidneys and your lights!"

Frazier, somehow, in the last hour had dimly foreseen it. He seemed to know that this terrible man and his dozen roughs would seek a pretext to rob him. And subconsciously he had prepared for defence. Ill though he was, he flew at the windpipe of the astonished Ugo.

Knives were whipped out, wild cries filled the air.

Ugo, panting, flung Frazier off. But Frazier was at him again. He saw the great fellow's knife drop to the floor. He reached for it—one of that band, at least, he would have!

And then swiftly the man with the imperious air, the well dressed stranger on whom he had counted at least for moral support, rose and put his foot on the knife.

"Ugo," he said sternly, "not that—let him live! It means more."

Ugo slunk back. "All right, Captain, if you say so."

Frazier slid into his seat, spent; he buried his face in his hands; the conspiracy against him was complete. He was rich and defenceless; a gang of thugs licked chops at him, biding their time—and the courtly gentleman was their leader!

Among all that unfeeling crew the girl alone tried to help him, and he fell nearly unconscious, with a vision of her by his side.

Once he dropped headlong in front of Ugo, and Ugo lifted a spiked heel to crush in his head. The girl screamed.

"Ugo!" reproved the man with the goatee.

"As you say," grumbled Ugo. "But isn't it easier, ah, easier, to take no chances *now,* Captain?"

He whom they called captain bent over Frazier; he felt over him, around his vest.

"Keep off, robbers," panted Frazier, and hugged his wallet.

"Bah," growled Ugo, "Let Ugo eat the soused swine. Ugo has strong teeth. Wait, wait, Ugo will get him alone, yet!"

Frazier was beginning to lose track of things, he was growing worse, when he heard three shots, or perhaps four, the last two together; and he saw Ugo towering over him with a smoking pistol.

"Get out, pig," commanded Ugo, and he kicked Frazier out. Several men stood with hands in the air; three fellows covered the driver. The guard lay in the dust, his face twitching.

The captain and the girl had disappeared.

"Aha, Americano," cried Ugo in deep satisfaction. "Now Ugo he carve you thin."

And giving Frazier another kick that straightened him out for the moment, Ugo tied a not over-clean bandanna over Frazier's eyes.

"March!" commanded Ugo, prodding Frazier from behind with the pistol, "or Ugo, he shoot your ears off!"

All the cruel tales of Italian banditti flashed through Frazier's mind. He walked on obediently.

Suddenly Ugo paused on the leafy trail.

"Stop it!" he cried in disgust. "Jesu, stop it!"

"What?" asked Frasier.

"That noise in your drunken throat. It irritates Ugo."

"I can't help it," said the unhappy Frazier.

"Stop it," vociferated Ugo, "or Ugo he trim your hair off with bullets!"

Twice, before they came to the top of the ridge, Ugo begged Frazier to cease his infernal noise, and twice Ugo brought a tremdous hand down on Frazier's back as a warning.

Then Ugo stumbled inside a hut or house, and Frazier dropped panting to a bare floor.

In an adjoining room he heard Ugo's threatening basso and the silver voice of the captain and the soft tones of the girl in a conference.

"We ought, Ugo," said the captain, "to get a ransom from this silly duck, of at least a hundred thousand."

They clinked glasses and Ugo laughed hardily. "Two hundred thousand, my captain. These American pigs are very rich."

"I'm sure he has no such money," urged the girl.

"Leave Ugo to find that out," said Ugo complacently. "Ah, Ugo, he roast the feet off him!"

"Ugo!" cried the girl in remonstrance.

"I wish," mused the captain, "we had something to bring him to his wits—before we kill him this way. Confound it, we must bring him to his wits—we don't even know his name."

"I'll carve him to ribbons," vowed Ugo. "Ugo will make him look like a sliced carrot if he do not come to himself and behave—he and his silly noises!"

Frazier gasped on the floor, too weak even to lift his bandage. He felt the girl kneel by him; she put water to his lips.

"Poor boy," she murmured tenderly. "Try it—it is fresh mountain water."

"God bless you," gasped Frazier.

"Do you feel better?" she asked anxiously, "after the—the walk?"

"No," said Frazier. "Worse—worse!"

Ugo swore mightily. "Pull his thumb nails out!" he cried. "He is make-believing! Once Ugo lifted a man off the floor—a Jew—for one hour, by the thumbs!"

"Ugo, Ugo!" implored the girl, "do go!"

Ugo shuffled out, growling most horribly.

Yet he seemed hardly gone before he burst in again and slammed the door behind him.

"Oh, Jesu!" cried Ugo in passion, "the gendarmes! Who would have thought them here—so soon!"

"Joyful news!" said the captain, disconcerted. "Quick, Ugo, hide! You and the sick one. I, thank heavens, am not known!"

"Yes," exclaimed Ugo, "it is the false wall for Ugo and the pig."

He lifted the limp Frazier under an arm. It seemed to Frazier he was dragged in somewhere, and then wedged in a space no wider than a trunk and no higher than a table.

Hoofs thundered outside. "Oho!" cried voices.

"Oho!" cried the captain within, and he flung wide the door.

"Ah, the gendarmes," cried the captain. "Heaven be praised! I am rescued! Myself and daughter have been beset by villains. But we escaped—to this bit of a hiding place."

Men with heavy boots filed in. "Is there any trace of the long rascal?" asked a voice. "Or of the Americano?"

"I do not know," replied the captain. "I hope you may find them."

"Hark!" exclaimed the other suddenly, "What was that? Are there any here besides yourselves? It sounded—like a hiccough!"

"We are alone," insisted the captain. "You heard nothing."

"No, I am sure! Listen! There it is again!"

Inside the little space Ugo was pressing the point of his knife against Frazier's throat.

"Stop it," Ugo was whispering hoarsely. "This little nook is provisioned. Ugo can live here a month. But by the Holy Virgin, Ugo will not lose out by your infernal croaking. Stop it, now, or Ugo kill!"

Frazier suddenly grew wide awake. He saw Ugo's gleaming eyeballs near his own. Every nerve, every fibre in him, cried out in mad protest against his foolish throat, now endangering his life. Will—will!—he must get back his will! He dug his finger nails into his flesh, he forced the blood into his temples until his head grew hot, he sweated, he gripped his shoes with his toes, he choked—he ceased to breathe—his heart stopped—the world stopped—everything stopped—he stopped hiccoughing!

Outside, furniture was dragged about, walls were being sounded.

"You see," said the bland captain, "we two are alone."

"Adios, then!" cried voices. "We'll catch the rascals yet!"

"Adios!" cried the captain, "and my sincerest wishes that you may."

The door slammed, hoofs thundered and then grew faint in the distance.

Ugo dragged Frazier back into the room by the slack of his clothes, Frazier swooning.

"There, my millionaire infant," chuckled Ugo. "Captain, Ugo he choke him quiet. Now Ugo he make him talk money!"

"Father," coaxed the girl, "do let the poor fellow rest."

"Maybe, Corona," mused the captain, "that is best."

So she made a place for Frazier on the floor and she covered him with coats and dresses.

And Frazier fell asleep, into a dreamless sleep, with a vision of an angel ministering him.

He awoke with a feeling of languor. The sun had a different slant—it was coming up! He had slept all the afternoon and night.

A shadow flittered in—it was Corona.

"Good morning, Corona," murmured Frazier "Good morning, girl!"

"Good morning," she smiled pleasantly. "I'm so glad you are better. Will you have some breakfast?"

"I'm famished, Corona!" said Frazier. "Let me get up—"

"No," her forefinger warned him. "You lie until I've fed you."

Out she went and the kitchen grew fragrant with crackling bacon and sizzling eggs.

Ugo came out, nose bent over lips, looking monstrously tall beside Frazier huddled on the floor—Ugo the terrible! bearing a basin of warm water and a clean towel.

"What, ho, Ugo's captive!" cried Ugo. "Not dead yet? Aha, Ugo shall torture you. Carve your little toes off. Fricassee your brains, slice your liver into hash—"

"Ugo," cried the captain from the kitchen, "shut up! Let the boy be."

"But," roared the lank Ugo, "Ugo wants his ransom!"

"After breakfast, you brutes," said Corona firmly.

She pushed Ugo out, Ugo scowling and grimacing. She fed Frazier, and he grew strong magically. He marvelled he had not marked her loveliness sooner.

"If you are strong enough for a little walk," said Corona, "the air will do you good."

"Shall I be allowed out?"

"With me—on parole," said Corona.

So they went out into the glory of the early morning under a sky as blue as a babe's eye, the pine needles all lacquered heavily with glistening dew.

Frazier was troubled for speech. Then it came, steadily. He put out his hands. "Corona," he said," this is no place for you. Sooner or later your father will be apprehended and Ugo the terrible hanged. Come away—before all this dishonor soils your soul."

"You are raving, senor," Corona tried to say indifferently, but ended in a constrained laugh.

"Come with me," pleaded Frazier, "away from all this deception."

"Deception?" gurgled Corona. "Let me abide by deception—always. It is so much a woman's nature!"

"Oh!" said Frazier, as if stabbed.

They went back into the hut. Ugo and the captain smoked cigars—rather good cigars—apart. Even in the bare, lonely hut, the captain reserved rank for himself.

"And now, Ugo's captive," Ugo rubbed his enormous hands, "our ransom! Ugo says at least two hundred thousand."

"Robber!" said Corona, cuttingly.

"I will take the gentleman's check," bowed the captain, "for one hundred thousand—on his word of honor for silence. Come, sir, what do you say?"

"What can I say?" asked Frazier, "except that it is my father who must honor the check."

"I'll take chances on your persuading him what my valiant Ugo might have done to you," slyly observed the captain.

"Ugo will cut off both his ears," vowed Ugo the gaunt.

And he swore Frazier to silence in a most awful oath, mixing hell, heaven, virgins, and blasphemy.

"And now," said the captain, "you may go—any time. I believe you are strong enough."

"Come to America," admired Frazier. "We love speed—even in holdups."

"Wait! Wait!" Ugo bustled up importantly. "Don't forget to take along the captain's passport."

"Passport?" wondered Frazier. "What's that good for?"

"'Twill make you immune from the rest of our band for thirty days—but thirty only," said Ugo the great.

"And if I fall into the hands of any other band?"

Ugo gave an enormous shrug. "God of mercy, that is not my affair! But," he added in a confidential whisper, "if you will make it another fifty thousand—to Ugo personally—Ugo will have the heart's blood of all bands that do not give you immunity for five years."

"I'll take the chances," laughed Frazier, "on getting out without thinning the old man's wad further."

Ugo gnashed his teeth horribly. "Remember, Ugo belongs to the Black Hand! Some one will follow and cut off your ears and your father's ears and your mother's ears if that money is not paid!"

He blindfolded Frazier, and Corona led him down the trail.

"Good-bye," said she a bit tragically. "The stage coach comes in ten minutes. Don't take off the bandage until then."

"Dear girl," he whispered, "you have saved my life. And I am more than grateful. Come and lead an honorable life—with me."

"Are we two, then, made for each other?—I a brigand's daughter?" she mocked. "No, no, no!" she laughed softly in a way that tore at his heart-strings. "For I do not understand wrong as you understand wrong."

"You will stay here with your father—always and always?"

"Who knows?" she mused coquettishly. "Perhaps some brigand's son is already waiting to take me away!"

"If you ever change your mind—" choked Frazier.

Her contralto tones gripped him again. "We have your address on file—and I shall fly—fly to you!"

"Then it's good-bye, Corona?" asked Frazier, somewhat hoarsely.

"Farewell!" said Corona mournfully—and was gone.

Ten minutes after, he heard the stage coach. He flung off the bandage and signalled. His eyes were blurred from the pressure of the cloth, but as he climbed into a seat, this time on the box, he saw seated beside him—Corona!

"So you changed your mind?" he asked eagerly.

Her color came and went in a ravishing display of dimples.

"Read your passport." Corona tried to frown.

Frazier opened the letter. Out tumbled his check. And this is what he read:

"My dear Frazier,

Corona and I, on our annual trip to the mountains with our servants, found you dangerously ill with *Singultus*. Unfortunately my medicines had gone ahead, and I was halting my household to send sixty miles for some chloroform, when Corona—sly Corona—and Ugo—my cook—had an inspiration. I believe you owe them your life.

A. Foscari, Physician, Surgeon, etc."

"Good heavens!" gasped Frazier, and his jaw dropped.

There was a roar inside the coach, and then Dr. Foscari poked out a smiling face.

"What!" cried the doctor, "You thought that these, my good servants, were brigands? And that Ugo was their leader—Ugo my mild, gentle cook—"

"Chef, Master," broke out Ugo, injured, "and a vegetarian!"

"Doctor," stuttered Frazier, "I owe you apologies—"

"No, we you! *Diablo,* young man," cried the doctor gravely, "You were at death's door! And now—have you time? Your nerves are unstrung. Join us, for our two weeks."

Frazier hesitated. He looked into the eyes of the roguish daughter.

"Shall I?" he whispered. "Shall I?"

"*You* decide!" said Corona steadily.

And Frazier did.

I or L?

BY CHARLES A. FISHER

Here's a yarn that smacks of the sea. We land lubbers are amazed to read of a daring bank robbery but think of stealing a big sailing vessel, crew and cargo! How it was done and later discovered by a keen-eyed captain of a Royal Mail liner is here related in a rattling piece of sea-detective fiction.

THE *Iberian* was an old-fashioned Scotch liner, chiefly noted for the gruffness of her commander, Captain Frederick Barker, with the sub-title: Lieut. R. N. R. Never did the *Iberian* accomplish a transatlantic voyage but bluff Captain Barker must needs have become involved in dispute, more or less acrimonious, with some over-particular saloon passenger. This time it had been with the florid commercial gentleman—first day out, at luncheon—the cocksure passenger with the fiery muttonchop whiskers and the very odd left eye: an eye that seemed always more than half closed, while the other optic penetrated you uncomfortably, like the point of a poniard.

"Don't fawncy that squinting chap from Ipswich!" grumbled Capt. Fred'k Barker, R. N . R., as he turned wearily into his bunk, after midnight. " *'Shipowners never properly appreciate a trusty servant.'* Maybe he was right; but what bloody business of his is it, to tell *me* so?"

Next day—at dinner—it was about the butter.

The passenger of the sanguinary muttonchops had fixed his piercing starboard eye on the stolid commander, while the left eye continued to droop—slowly—cynically.

"But your passengers, Captain, are entitled to—"

"Oh, yes! I'm aware we've got to pamper their precious little squeamish stomachs. But wait till we get a bit of rough weather! Then they'll have something else to think of besides butter."

"Nevertheless," cuttingly continued the disputatious muttonchops, "this company of yours exacts a very good price for a very slow passage, and yet it furnishes—"

"Very good butter, sir—very good butter!" repeated the master of the *Iberian*. "My ship may be a trifle slower than some of the new, high-decked 'Ocean Greyhounds,' but *my* passengers get all the fine feeding that's good for them."

About halfway across—the *Iberian* having dodged icebergs, in the fog, for two days in succession—Captain Barker was just proceeding to peal off his damp uniform, preparatory to seeking "a wee wink o' sleep," when the purser rapped at his door.

"Beg pardon, sir! There's a difficulty in the smoking room. The man with the red whiskers has been winning high stakes. He's brought up candles from his stateroom, and they're at it now, sir."

Captain Barker put on his coat and cap.

"What's the trouble here?" he demanded, suddenly appearing in the smoking room.

The red-headed passenger was dealing the cards by the dim light of two wax candles, stuck into ale bottles, while two dismayed stewards stood near the doorway, in deprecatory attitudes, vacillating between their oath of allegiance to the

company's rules and the prospect of generous tips from the gamblers.

"No lights in the smoking room after six bells!" thundered Captain Barker.

"What's the time by your watch, Captain?" calmly enquired the man with the drooping eyelid.

"A sailor's no use for a watch, at sea; and when he's ashore, there'll be an abundance o' timepieces to tell him when it's proper to be abed. All lights on *my* ship—except service lights—to be extinguished at eleven o'clock. And let any man aboard *my* ship beware of playing any but a *fair* game—night or day!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"What I say!" retorted the captain, meeting the other's gaze unflinchingly. "And more! If any one aboard *my* ship persists in breaking the rules, I'll not hesitate to lock him up, below—*in irons,* if necessary."

The red-headed man began arranging his hand. "I shall report your conduct to the company, Captain Barker," he said, very distinctly, without raising his eyes from his cards.

"Report all ye've a mind to!" frowned the master. "Steward! Throw the candles overboard and lock up the smoking room! And you Mr. Purser, see that it's done!"

Before rolling into his bunk, Captain Barker made the following entry in his pocket memorandum book: "June 27th —Jas. Balloran, merchant, of Ipswich, threatens to complain to the home office. —Smok'g R'm—after 11 P. M. gambling by candle-light. Witnesses: purser and two stewards."

"There! Now let'm report, and be damned to him!"

Some fifteen months later, the *Iberian,* westbound, was once again entering port.

As Captain Barker, in charge of an active young clerk from the Agency, was hastening across the harbor, with the ship's entry papers, his observant eye lighted on a large full-rigged brig, discharging cargo at one of the coffee warehouses, near the ferry-slip.

"See there, young man!" cried the captain, admiringly, "A full-rigged brig!"

"Rare bird in these parts, Captain!"

"Aye! Or in any parts—nowadays. Quite out of the fashion, young man! Used to sail the like o' that meself, in my canvas days.—Elliptical stern, too, by Jove!—What's her name, do you know?"

"*Alexis,*" answered the clerk, as the ferryboat sidled into her slip, and the odd-looking craft was lost to view. "Just up from South America, with a very valuable cargo of coffee. Owner comes with her. Firm of Gibson Hoffmann, they say, has bought most all of the coffee, and there's some talk of the owner's wanting to sell the brig."

But—the master of a Royal Mail Steamer has very little time for idle conversation on the day of arrival. Captain Barker was incontinently dragged off to the Agency office, hurried, via the British Consulate, to the U. S. Custom House, hustled from pillar to post among Uncle Sam's careworn officials, forced to sign a lot of papers, hold up his right hand and solemnly swear to a bewildering array of occult facts, and—at last!—politely permitted to toddle off to his hotel, his mind occupied by a train of more or less sentimental reflections, stirred up by the glimpse of the big brig with the elliptical stern.

Captain Frederick Barker, R. N. R., registered, went to his room, took a bath, imbibed an Amercan cocktail, disposed of a sumptuous luncheon, lit a fragrant "Key West" and, dropping into one of the comfortable rocking chairs on the veranda, resigned himself to the anticipatory delights of a week ashore.

He had hardly sat thus for five minutes when a man emerged from the hotel bar-

room, under the veranda, walked to the street corner, and stood at the lamp post, picking his teeth.

Where had the master of the *Iberian* seen that peculiar droop of the left eyelid—that mystic, sinister portside of a face?

"Just like that blarsted cad of a card sharper that threatened to report me to the home office," he soliloquized. "The beggar!—But that fellow had the reddest of red hair and the most flamboyant of whiskers, while this chap's as smooth as a fresh-scraped copperbottom. And his hair's black—black as bituminous bunker-coal."

The dark-haired stranger presently strolled off down the street, while the captain's mind became gradually absorbed in the rapid panorama of the crowded thoroughfare, on which his eye rested with dreamy indolence.

The *Iberian's* master was much in need of a good night's rest. It was after eleven o'clock the next morning before he fairly felt his shore-legs and was in proper trim to stalk down to 'change, for the purpose of consulting the company's commercial agent.

While discussing ship's business with that very busy gentleman, the captain suddenly checked himself, and, pointing to a group of merchants standing some distance off, in earnest conference, inquired, curiously:

"I say, who's that very clean-shaven begg—gentleman, over yonder; the chap with the jet black hair?"

"Who? That one with the queer left eye?"

"Aye! With his fists full of grain—or is it coffee beans?"

"Oh! That's the owner of the brig *Alexis,* from Pernambuco, with coffee. Ship, as well as cargo, for sale."

"What's his name?" asked the captain, more than ever fascinated by the drooping eyelid.

"Oh! Porringer, or Lorringer—or some such name," answered the preoccupied steamship agent, as he ripped open two telegrams simultaneously, lending a cheerful ear, the while, to three merchants, who had rushed up and were all talking Liverpool freight rates at once.

Meanwhile the black-haired man with the coffee beans was so engrossed as not to become at all aware of the presence of Captain Barker, who, elbowing his way through the pandemonium of commerce, regained the street, musing greatly.

"Damme! Can there be two chaps with a left eye like that?"

The commander of the *Iberian* pulled out his memorandum book and looked up the *Ipswich* smoking room entry.

"I'll step over to the consulate and take a glance at the register of that brig. Elliptical stern! Most extr'ordinary resemblance to my old *Alice!*"

The British consul, in accordance with a popular but erroneous impression as to consuls, happened to be out. The register, a document required to be deposited by every British vessel during her stay in a foreign port, was produced by the affable young consular clerk.

It was a bright, new piece of parchment, setting forth that the brig *Alexis,* full rigged, elliptical stern, of 751[10] tons register, belonged solely to one Lorrimer, of Kelceyport, Nova Scotia, and duly enumerating all the usual descriptive particulars; the whole properly signed, and with the official seals affixed.

"So!" observed the evidently disappointed Captain Barker, after a frowning scrutiny. "Lorrimer is his name! I would have sworn it was Balloran, of Ipswich. Must be some other beggar with the same odd squint."

He folded up the register.

"Clean, new parchment!" he went on, turning it over and over and talking more to himself than to the clerk. "The mahs-

ter must have lost the original and gotten this as a duplicate."

"No, Captain Barker. Original register, I fawncy. Let's see!" The clerk unfolded it again. "Built five years ago, in Nova Scotia," he added, pointing to the date.

"What!" cried the old mariner. "Did I overlook that? Built five years ago? Built *twenty*-five years ago, more like! and in *old* Scotia, I'll warrant. That brig's not a bluenose."

"You must be mistaken, Captain," diffidently ventured the clerk. "Here it is, in the register!"

"I know better. Saw her yesterday, with me own eyes, as I was crossing the ferry with the Agency clark. She's all painted up uncommon gaudy, but I'll stake me life she's all o' twenty years old."

Both men now began an eager examination of the register—heads close together.

"And look at that!" criticised the captain. "Kelceyport! 'Tis not likely for a bit of a coast-hamlet like Kelceyport to be a port of registry."

The consular clerk now became gravely attentive. It was a matter of official punctilio with him to know all about ships' registers.

Jumping up, he soon returned with a fat volume, out of the consul's private office.

"You're right, Captain," he said meekly, closing the book with an anxious sigh. "It's *not* a port of registry. How did I ever fail to note it!"

Captain Barker's usually sombre face flushed. An idea suddenly flashed upon him. His eyes sparkled.

"Get 'Lloyd's'!" he ordered, while he once again studied the parchment intently.

The clerk brought forth another bulky book. "If the register was issued but a few years ago, Captain Barker, you'll scarcely find the *Alexis* there. The latest 'Lloyd's' hasn't reached us yet—if it's already issued, which I doubt."

"I'm not looking for the *Alexis*," grunted the captain, as he turned the leaves under the head of "A." "How many tons does that register say?"

"Seven fifty one—ten," answered the clerk.

"Quite right—and here she is!"—with an exultant tremor—"Brig *Alice*—751[10] tons—Owners: Muir and Mackenzie, Dundee. Built twenty-four years ago. Didn't I tell ye?—And I commanded her meself—took charge of her, soon as she was ready for sea."

The grim mariner's face grew gentler, as he went on, muttering to himself:

"Ah, those joyous days! When I sailed her—me handsome, trim, new brig scudding before the breeze like a gull! When a man was mahster aboard his own ship, and didn't have to worry about stewards, and coal supply, and quality-butter, and complaints, and smoking-room card sharpers. When a mahster-mariner ran a *ship*, and not a ferry-boat-hotel!"

Captain Frederick Barker, R. N. R., stifled a sigh, and an oath. The clerk stood by, abashed.

"There's some deep-sea knavery here," continued the captain, after a pause. "Run over to the Exchange, me lad! Find the agent of the *Iberian* and fetch him here, at once. But—very privately—understand? Steer clear o' that coffee buccaneer with the uncanny eye—do ye mind?"

When the consul for Great Britain came in, shortly afterwards, he was astonished to find Captain Barker and the steamship agent in his private office, in close consultation over the forged register. The captain hastily explained his well-grounded suspicions.

"The audacity of it!" exclaimed the consul, aghast. "I wonder where the

fellow obtained the parchment blank. Collusion with some official of Her Majesty's Registry Office, I suspect."

"Aye! And with the mahster of the *Alice* as well," emphasized Captain Barker, as he rose to his feet with an air of tense determination. "Meet me here in two hours, Mr. Consul, and have present the purchasers of the cargo—I hope they haven't paid for it yet. Set the police on this sharper—this Lorrimer! Keep him shadowed! Meanwhile find out what you can—underhand, and without exciting suspicion—from the customs entry and the bills of lading."

Captain Barker put on his hat, grasped his blackthorn cane, and made for the door.

"And where are *you* going, Captain?" asked the agent, quite overwhelmed by the rapidity and decision with which the master of the *Iberian* was assuming command.

"I'll be back here in two hours by the clock," replied the captain, disappearing without another word.

"Here am I, assistant policeman to Her Majesty's Board of Trade—amateur detective—in me old age!" he growled, as he strode to the waterfront, where he hailed a boatman and sat down on the stern seat of a dirty yawl.

"Pass me a paddle!" he ordered, handing the oarsman a crisp dollar bill. "I want to do the steering. Pull away!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" assented the yawl owner.

An old shipmaster always keeps a soft corner in his heart for the vessel he commanded in his younger days. The bark, or brig, whose deck he once trod with all the high hopes of youth, remains forever enshrined in his memory. Battered by wind and wave, let her be repaired and repainted; let them change her mast and her masters, her rig, her color, and her name, still there is something about her hull—about the very form and mould of her—that he who has been her navigator will never forget.

Captain Barker steered the yawl toward the coffee wharves, finally jamming up against a barge directly under the stern of the brig.

The captain remained seated.

"Where do you want me to take you, sir—now?"

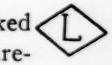
"You wait till I tell you," glowered the master-mariner.

The boatman pulled in his oars and lighted his pipe, while the captain looked up sharply at the brig's stern above him.

The word "Dundee" had evidently been chiseled clean away, and a strip of wood let into the planking, in its place. Immediately above glittered the new name, "Alexis," in bright, gilt letters, carved on a strip of hard wood which had likewise been smoothly sunk into the timbers. All this so deftly done and so carefully painted over, that no one would notice it unless he were actually looking for it.

The amateur detective gave the boatman a cigar. "Be off with you!" he snorted, good-humoredly, as he alighted on the barge and climbed up on the wharf.

Making his way along, leisurely, through groups of lounging sailors and perspiring stevedores, he kept a sharp eye on the coffee as the sacks came over the ship's side, six or eight at a time, in slings. The mate was at the main hatch, and the cook, evidently a Portugese, was leaning lazily over the forward bulwarks. No one else was visible on deck except some half-dozen stevedores, at work discharging cargo.

Every bag of coffee was marked 
Captain Barker, in passing, carefully scrutinized the mark, and as he loitered along the wharf, a keen glance at the overhanging bow served to show him that the word "Alexis," in gilt letters, on

a strip of wood, had been substituted there for "Alice," as skilfully as at the stern.

He cast one last fond look at his old brig, conquering the temptation to linger about the spot, and sauntered along toward the narrow driveway, leading, between the warehouses, to the street beyond. His investigation had been as definite as it had been rapid.

"I thought as much!" he grinned, complacently. "They've stolen the ship, and they've stolen the cargo as well. 'Tis as clear as the stencil on the sacks. Another day or two and this wholesale robber from Ipswich would have disposed of the booty—for cash—and decamped."

At the appointed hour, every chair in the consul's private office was occupied. There were the two well known, wealthy coffee merchants, Mr. Hoffman Gibson and Mr. Gibson Hoffman; the consul; the steamship agent; Captain Barker and the consular clerk.

"We have convened, gentlemen," began the consul, "on a most extraordinary—"

"Beg pardon, Mr. Consul!" interposed the captain. "I'd like to ask a question. What is the cargo worth?"

"Total—about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars," replied Mr. Hoffman Gibson.

"How much have you paid this sharper?"

"Two thousand dollars on account—balance tomorrow," said Mr. Hoffman Gibson.

"And our firm—one thousand on account—balance tomorrow," said Mr. Gibson Hoffman.

"Put him off under some subterfuge; don't pay him another shilling!" cautioned Captain Barker.

And—turning to the clerk—"What's the mark on the bills of lading at the custom house—did ye ascertain *that?*"

"Diamond L, sir!" answered the young man, staring uncertainly at the consul and at the captain, alternately.

"Gentlemen!" declared the master of the *Iberian,* "the name of my old brig, 'Alice,' has been changed to 'Alexis'—stem and stern—and the mark on the bags has been altered from to A single stroke of the brush has done it, for every sack of that cargo!"

"And, please sir, there's an erasure in the ship's name, on the Pernambuco Bill of Health," ventured the clerk. "It's cleverly done and you can scarce make it out. The quarantine officer overlooked it, but *I* detected it."

The captain threw a withering glance at his would-be sub-assistant, who withdrew, forthwith, into himself.

For three full minutes—by the big consular clock, ticking on the wall—no one uttered a word.

Finally, the steamship agent broke the awkward silence. "Then perhaps," he suggested, "the consul had better cable the consulate at Pernambuco, asking when and for what destination the *Alice* cleared and was supposed to sail?"

"If Her Majesty's Consul will permit me," protested the captain, ignoring the steamship agent's suggestion—"Mr. Consul, if I were you, I'd cable to Dundee and on this wise:

'Muir and Mackenzie, Dundee.
Where is brig *Alice,* what cargo, to whom consigned? Answer paid.
British Consul.'

and tomorrow, at noon, we could meet here again, for the reply. Meanwhile, Mr. Consul do you cause the police to watch this fellow Balloran, of Ipswich."

"Just so!" said Mr. Hoffman Gibson and the consul, in a breath. "Thank you very much, Captain Barker!"

"Yes, yes! Thank you, most cordial-

ly, Captain Barker!" put in Mr. Gibson Hoffman. "You've saved the bona fide owners of the cargo, whoever they may be, a fortune, and us from further loss." And Mr. Gibson Hoffman got up, shook hands with Captain Barker, and sat down again. So did Mr. Hoffman Gibson.

"Aye, aye! That's all well enough. But don't let your thief get away," urged the captain. "Invite him to dinner, so he may suspect nothing. Never lose sight of him for a moment. I know him for a scheming beggar. Invite him to dinner—this very evening!"

"Sit down to dinner with him! Shocking—shocking! Impossible—impossible!" groaned the two merchants.

"Dear me, gentlemen, how dreadful!" gasped the consul. "In all my official experience, gentlemen, I have never—Astonishing—most astounding!"

"And how do you suppose they altered the mark on all those coffee sacks?" asked the puzzled agent, as he and the captain were leaving the consul's office.

"Ran the *Alice* into some lonely, sheltered cove, turned over the whole cargo, re-stenciled and re-stowed it. That fellow, Balloran, could corrupt a whole crew, just as he did my smoking room stewards. Had ample time, too,—the knave!—during the voyage from Pernambuco, to make out a complete set of false papers, as well as to shave off his glaring muttonchops and dye his hair. All that coffee, I make no doubt, was originally consigned to some firm beginning with an 'I'—somewhere on the Continent, I fawncy; never intended for this port. Wait till we hear from Dundee," concluded Captain Barker.

Next day, the following cable message reached the British Consulate:

"*Alice* Pernambuco Hamburg, Cargo Ilsenburg Soehne.

Muir."

With this in hand, the consul at once procured a warrant for the arrest of the chief culprits. Too late! Neither the offending Balloran, alias Lorrimer, nor the master of the brig could be located.

"Precisely as I feared!" growled Captain Barker. "Two many mahsters! Why didn't they invite the fellow to dinner?"

"Never mind, Captain!" laughed the steamship agent. "They've bagged the mate and the Portugese cook, and frightened both of them into a confession that bears out your theory in every detail. And here, Captain Barker, is a beautiful gold watch—with an inscription—the house of Hoffman Gibson begs you to accept as a mark of their esteem."

And that wasn't the end of it.

Before the *Iberian* sailed on her homeward voyage, the firm of Gibson Hoffman and Company gave an elaborate banquet at the Neptune club, at which Captain Barker, R. N. R., was presented with another heavy gold watch, likewise suitably inscribed, and with a chain of fabulous weight attached.

Indeed, up to the hour of sailing, the unfortunate master of the *Iberian* was wined and dined, till he was only too glad to put to sea. When Captain Barker reached Liverpool, he found awaiting him a letter and a package from Messrs. Muir and Mackenzie. The package contained a gold watch and a pair of fine new chronometers.

Scarcely had he finished reading the very flattering letter when the customs clerk handed him a formidable envelope —from Hamburg. The long missive was written on a letterhead adorned with an ancient German motto, and was from the very old and highly respected firm of Jeremias Ilsenburg Soehne. It began,

"Most worthy and esteemed Mister Captain Barker!" And concluded as follows:

"Consonantly with the present (in which the same we hasten our very inmost thank to say, for prompt discovery

of most infamous and neverbeforeacquainted piracy on high sea) we, on bottom of this undersigned, make ourselves the very large joy to forward (through means of your highly honorable Liverpool Steamship Company, owners of S. S. *Iberian*) a trifle present, the which, let us hopen you will, esteemed Sir and Captain, receive to carry with himself."

In like manner ran the rest of this copious and exceedingly gratifying commercial document.

The trifling present, consonantly forwarded to Captain Barker, turned out to be a massive gold watch, and, securely attached thereto, a hefty fourteen carat chain.

"Umph!" commented the captain, summing up the case. "Value of ship and cargo, nigh thirty-three thousand pounds! For detective services: two banquets, three luncheons, one and a half columns in the newspapers, two chronometers, and four monstrous pocket time-pieces, with chains like anchor cables. What was it that impertinent Ipswich pirate had to say about the gratitude of shipping merchants? But I do wonder," wound up Captain Frederick Barker, R. N. R., with a grim chuckle, "who it was reported my sleuth activity to the Messrs. Jeremias Ilsenburg Soehne, Hamburg. Was it Mr. Hoffman Gibson, or Mr. Gibson Hoffman?"

Corralling Cupid at Tamale Flats

BY WILL ROBINSON

Objecting fathers have been outwitted for a thousand years by fervent lovers probably will be for many more years to come, but in all the annals of Cupid no interfering Dad was ever double-crossed before by John Chinaman, brown biscuits, and prunes.

OVERLAND JACK Hardinger brought his sixteen-mule team into the camping ground at Tamale Flat with a heavy heart. It was his last trip. The railroad was now less than ten miles away from the Happy Warrior Mine, and within the next few days it would accept freight at Porphyry, their present terminus. That would end Overland Jack's hundred mile trips to Phoenix, or for that matter, to any place else. His occupation would be gone.

From Hardinger's point of view, for a quarter of a generation the country had been steadily going to the dogs. With each succeeding year the iron horse, with its prosperity-sapping influence, had been pushing its vile nose farther and farther into this last retreat of the pioneer. Now its greed had grown to such proportions that, not satisfied with its great transcontinental lines, it had extended branch roads across cacti-covered deserts and over pine and oak-clad mountains until a man couldn't drive his team anywhere without his horses stumbling over its accursed rails.

As a last evidence of the degradation of the country, brought about by railroads, a fellow freighter had told Jack the day before, with tears starting from his sandblown eyes, that five-cent beer had been introduced at the capital of the state, and that they were giving pennies in change at the same city's new department store. The frontier had vanished forever.

Hardinger twisted the jerk-line around the pommel of his saddle and stiffly climbed down from Nance, the big near-wheeler.

"Unhook!" he called briefly to his swamper, "and take the mules down to the 'dobe hole." Then as the Mexican began unharnessing, Jack, with a lump in his throat, cast his eyes over his outfit. The animals, like the three, big, high-bedded wagons, and like their owner, were pretty well worn out. Hardinger gulped, and for solace reached to his rear pocket, bit off the end of a new plug of "Star," and chewed it with gloomy ruminations. Slowly he walked over to the wagons, pulled out the chuck box, and laden with kettle and frying pan, went to start a fire for supper.

On his way he had again to stop and watch his mules, as with lagging gait and hanging heads they filed under a shelving cliff to the water hole. "They know it's the end as well as I do," said Jack brokenly, and he almost swallowed his tobacco in the poignancy of his emotion. As he returned to his task he saw a Chinaman, rather taller than most of his countrymen and dressed in a well worn suit of American cut, coming out of the gathering night along the dusty road.

Hardinger's face lightened slightly. "John," he asked when the man reached him, "can you cook?"

The Chinaman nodded.

"Savey biscuits, bacon and beefsteak fryin'?"

Again the Oriental assented.

"Good enough," said the freighter. "I'm just one day out and got a good grub box. I'm as dumpy tonight as an orphaned mule, and a good supper might help some. You mess me up some chuck, and if it's flavorish you get your own price. Is it a go?"

The Chinaman appeared to be studying the question.

"The one thing that I am particular about," continued Overland Jack, "is the steak. Don't be stingy with the lard and fry it a-plenty. I'm a little tasty about meat."

Still the Oriental seemed to hesitate.

"Well," said Hardinger irritably, "what are you balkin' about? You know what steak is, don't you—beef—cow—you savey him?"

"Oh, yes, I understand," returned the Chinaman politely, "but it is only fair to advise you that my knowledge of culinary matters is rather rudimentary. I minister to men's souls rather than to their material needs."

If old Nance, the mule, had suddenly wandered over and begun an ante-prandial recitation of "Thanatopsis," Hardinger could not have been more astonished. "Are you a Chinaman?" he asked fiercely.

"I am a native of Tiensin," replied the man urbanely—"a Chinaman, certainly."

"Then what do you mean by such language?" sputtered Jack. "It isn't decent. What are you doing in this part of the country?"

The newcomer smiled deprecatingly. "I have been making pastoral calls on my parishioners at the Happy Warrior. Being a synodical missionary, my congregation is naturally rather scattered."

"You came down on the railroad?" asked Jack with depressing conviction.

"Yes, as far as Porphyry."

"Well," said the man dejectedly, "I guess you're no worse than the freight cars, hobos, fleas, and the rest of the pests they have brought in. Go ahead with the supper, only don't let any of those awful remarks fall in the skillet—they might pizen the steak."

The Chinaman had the fire well under way, and several kettles bubbling appetizingly when there was a crashing in the brush down by the water hole; this was followed by the sounds of hoofs coming up the trail, and soon there appeared in the zone of firelight a man leading a horse. On the horse were the remnants of a buggy harness and a very pretty girl.

The man's hands and face were scratched as though by thorns, and his clothing was soiled and badly torn; the top of his hat was gone, and its wide brim hung about his neck like a misplaced halo. He assisted the girl to alight, tied his horse to a paloverde, and turned to the freighter. He was a young chap of the out-of-doors Western type, tall, sinewy, but with a face that showed refinement as well as good humor. "Hello, Jack," he said as if striving for a casual, easy-going tone, "are we in time for supper?"

Hardinger looked at him severely. "Well, Dick Reaves," he replied, "what have you been up to this time? Who is the young lady?"

"Oh, she's Miss Maxon." The tone was more casual than before.

"Oh, she is, is she?" returned Jack sarcastically. "I suppose it is just as natural for you to be in Tamale Flats with the big boss's daughter as it would be for you to be eatin' pancakes with the Queen of Sheba."

"But you don't understand," explained Dick, "Miss Maxon and I used to play together when the Happy Warrior was just a gopher hole."

"No doubt," said Jack, his tones reek-

ing with suspicion, "and the seeming unusual way you two came in was just one of those merry childhood games of yours. Has that millionaire dude that's going to marry the young lady any objections to your pasearing around the country with his fiancèe?"

"Jack," replied the young man earnestly, "that report was all a mistake. Miss Maxon is going to marry me. I have the license in my pocket right now."

"Are you and the rest of the family pulling together on this?" asked Hardinger, his skepticism more alive than ever. "Where is Miss Maxon's mother?"

"Well," hesitated Reaves, "you see she is over at Porphyry—went over in the new automobile."

"To meet anybody?"

"Why—I believe Mr. Biddle was expected."

"The one the girl was to marry?"

"The one that it was erroneously reported that she was to marry," corrected the young man firmly.

"Humph!" said Overland Jack. "Where's Miss Maxon's dad?"

"He's over at the mine," responded the youth, "and if there's any further information I can give you about the Maxon family, don't hesitate to ask it."

"Don't worry; I won't. Now introduce me to the young lady; there's a thing or two I want to tell her about you before—"

Whatever Hardinger's disclosures might have been, he lost his chance to make them, for just at this juncture he was interrupted by the booming of a man's voice on the mountain road. There was also an accompanying sound of horses' feet stumbling over loose rocks, but it was all lost in the approaching voice, which was tuned to the pitch of a Pueblo Indian war drum. "Whoa! Whoa! Blast your diabolical hide! Whoa! Of all the fat headed fools! I won't be able to sit down for a week! Whoa, you lantern-jawed, pig-eyed son of a giraffe, whoa!"

"Why, that's Dad right now," said the young lady as she joined the others about the fire. "Of course it's Dad. He must be on Gironomo. It always makes him cross to ride, poor old dear."

There were more rumblings borne upon the air, and around a shoulder of the road came a raw-boned, black horse bearing on his back a man whose bulk at once seemed to fill the entire scene. His big, round face was the color of an under-done brick, and his bristling mustache stuck out like the spikes on a bull terrier's collar. "Here, you," he roared to the Mexican swamper, "Hold this demoniacal beast, will you?" He alighted laboriously, and turning, found himself face to face with his daughter. At the sight of her his countenance grew still redder and his words came out in choked eruptions. "So here you are! What did you mean by running off and marrying that snip of a Dick Reaves without my permission? Haven't I been good to you? Haven't I pampered you?"

"But, Dad!" protested the girl.

"Pampered you," repeated Colonel Maxon, "that's it—pampered you—gave you everything in the world you asked for. And you, young man," he went on turning to Dick, "What have you got to say for yourself—marrying my daughter in this high handed fashion?"

"I would be glad to explain if—"

"A fine return you make to me, after my turning down a dozen better men to make you assayer—and all the other things I've done for you. Now you run off with Daisy, here, and marry her!"

"Father!" cried the girl, "do give me a chance to get a word in edgewise. There's no sense in your having a fit. We're not married yet!"

Colonel Maxon turned actually pale. "Not married? But the note you left

said you were going to be married. What in blazes have you been doing all this time?"

"It all began out of consideration for you," interposed the daughter promptly. "We knew you hated fuss and feathers about a wedding, so we were going over to Kirkland, and have the old minister there marry us quietly. You really wouldn't have cared, would you, Dad, dear?"

"If you started for Kirkland, what are you doing here in Tamale Flats?" asked the colonel testily.

"It was the accident—" began Dick.

The old mine owner exploded. "There you go! Excuses! When I was a young man—"

"But, Dad," interrupted Daisy, "a bowlder rolled down Granite Hill like an avalanche. It was pitch dark. We heard it coming and Dick pulled the horse clear out to the edge of the precipice where the road swings around so, and he held him there, too. If he hadn't been so cool, we'd have both been killed; as it was, it sheared off the back wheels. The horse ran, my dress started to catch somewhere, but Dick pulled it out and swung me off clear and clean. It was just splendid. Then he stayed with the horse, though it dragged him all over the side of the mountain."

A frightened look came into the old colonel's eyes. "Daisy," he cried, "were you hurt? If Dick Reaves had let you get hurt—"

"But he didn't. He saved my life!"

"Did you, Dick?" asked the father hesitatingly.

"It was my fault for getting her into such a fix," replied Dick stoutly. "She saved her own life; she's the pluckiest girl that ever lived. Colonel," he went on impulsively, "can't you let me marry her?"

The old man shook his head. "You can't afford her. She's a luxury. She's worse than a private car. I can't afford her myself, that's why I'm going to let that young millionaire have her. Why, Dick, you couldn't buy her shoes!"

"I have been offered the assistant-managership of the Sun-dance. If I took that—"

The familiar red returned to Colonel Maxon's cheeks with a rush. "You leave the Happy Warrior? I guess not. You can get that out of your system right now. If you are to be assistant manager of anybody's ore dump it will be mine."

"Would my salary be enough to pay for shoes?"

The girl smiled delightedly. "There, Dad," she cried, "the whole thing is up to you. Don't be a cheap skate."

"You can't do it." The colonel's voice again assumed the war drum roar. "You've had your chance. I talked with Mother over the 'phone at Pine Creek. I told her that if I got my hands on you, you'd not get away again. That's all there is to it. You clear out, Dick; and Daisy, you sit down and talk to me."

"Now, Daughter," said the colonel firmly, when Dick was out of hearing, "Reaves is a nice chap, but we've got to do better by you than that. Stuyvesant Biddle belongs to one of the oldest and best families in this country. Your mother has decided—that is, we both have decided—that he is the one for you to marry. Your mother is a Lippincott and he is a Biddle and they are both from Philadelphia. You can see for yourself how inevitable that makes it."

The girl looked at her father squarely. "Do you really think," she asked slowly, "that a man's family counts for more than the man himself?"

"You didn't seem to think that there was much the matter with the young man himself," retorted the father, "when you were back there at school."

Daisy's cheeks caught a reflection from

the camp fire, which burned some half dozen yards away, and showed a very decided pink. "But I never had any real idea of marrying him," she said hastily.

"Well, he certainly had some very real idea of marrying you. He asked my permission."

Daisy's little chin went up in the air. "Dad, did you ever ask anyone's permission to court Mother?"

The colonel coughed nervously. "You —you don't understand about this, Daughter. Biddle's father being president of this new road will make us pretty close associates in the future."

"If I thought, Dad," returned Daisy firmly, "that you were trying to make me a coupling link between the A. & M. and the Happy Warrior I'd get so mad I'd sizzle, but you are just pretending. Mother is a dear, but she's Eastern, and thinks a family alliance would be a grand thing. We are Western, you and I; and Dick is a sure enough man."

"I wouldn't bank too much on that," growled Colonel Maxon amiably. "He had three hours' start of me, and you're not married yet."

"Sh-h-h," cautioned Daisy, "he'll hear you," for Dick, with a peculiarly buoyant expression on his face, was walking back from the camp fire with a step that was decidedly at variance with his dejected gait upon leaving the Maxons a few minutes before.

"Colonel," he said steadily, "if Daisy is to marry Mr. Biddle, this will probably be our last evening together. I have something very important to talk over with her. Can you spare me a half hour of her company?"

The father looked at him suspiciously. "On one condition, Dick. Will you promise not to try to slip off with her—promise to stay right here until Mrs. Maxon comes along in the car?"

"I promise," he replied promptly.

"Oh, Dick!" The girl's voice was almost a wail. "What *did* you do that for?"

"Out of regard for parental authority," replied Dick soberly. "Colonel, I thank you for your consideration."

Daisy let the young man help her up, but her manner was decidedly glacial. As they walked toward the fire, Colonel Maxon joined the freighter who had just returned from inspecting his stock.

"Did you hear what that boy said to me?" asked the exasperated mine owner. "Great Christopher, that was the last straw. Jack, can you imagine a young man of any spirit promising that he wouldn't run away with a girl he loved, when it was his last chance?"

Miss Maxon and Dick stood before the fire where the Chinaman had spread out everything cookable that was in the chuck box, but Daisy did not see him. "Of course," she was saying, "if you didn't *want* to marry me, far be it from me to urge you. Why, Dick, I would have *walked* to Kirkland—before you said what you did—but not now. If you have anything to say to me, I wish you would make it as short as possible."

"I am yours to command," said Dick imperturbably, "only first let me introduce my old friend, the Reverend Sun Yip Goy, a regularly ordained minister in the Presbyterian church."

The Chinaman, holding a pan of steaming prunes in his hand, rose and made a profound bow. "I am very happy to meet you, Miss Maxon," he said. Daisy's face was as forbidding as an arctic wind.

"If you are ready, Sun," said Dick briskly, "We'll have the ceremony right now."

There was something in the young man's tone quite as much as in the words that startled Daisy into sudden excited attention. "Ceremony?" she repeated. Then with a little gasp: "Dick, what do you mean?"

"I mean our marriage ceremony, of

course," replied Dick calmly. "I don't know any quicker way to do it."

"We marry—here?" gasped the girl. "Now? With Dad just back of us?"

"Why not?" asked Dick, the glitter of excitement showing in his eyes. "License, witnesses, minister—all here! Also, your mother is due at any minute. It's now or never!"

Horror and admiration blended in equal proportions in the girl's face. "Dick," she cried, "you old dear! I might have known—" She turned her eyes from her lover to the minister, and a note of panic came into her voice. "But a Chi—"

"Doctor Goy," said Dick promptly, "is from a yellow jacketed family of Mandarins, whose blood is as blue as the Pacific. Translated into equal rank in this country he would be Duke of Kansas City at least."

"Do the honorable father and mother," asked Doctor Goy, "consent to this matrimonial alliance?"

"Sun," asked Dick, "were you a revolutionist?"

Again the reverend doctor bowed and waved the prune pan.

"Did your relative the Honorable Yuan Shih-kai consult the wishes of the Manchus, when he made that little ruction for them in Peking?"

"I get you," said Sun Yip Goy gravely. "Are you quite ready, Miss Maxon?"

"I—I—I guess so," hesitated Daisy. "Dick, how could I have doubted you? Mother will be scandalized, of course, but—"

Col. Maxon's voice came booming out of the background. "Hardinger, when I was a lad, if I were courting a girl—"

"We'd better all sit down," said Daisy. "Dick, you hold the skillet, and I can be poking the bacon round with a fork. Doctor Goy, can people be married sitting down?"

"It is a little unusual, Miss Maxon, but quite legal," replied the theologian. "Mr. Dick, have you the ring?"

"It's all ready, Sun," replied Dick nervously. "I'm holding it under the skillet handle."

"Ah, very good," said the Oriental. "Join your right hands."

"Dick," said Daisy calmly, "move just a little to the left, please, so Dad won't see our faces. He might think we were flirting."

"Colonel," came Overland Jack's voice out of the darkness—it sounded like the creaking of a dry wheel—"if the Lord had ever intended people to use railroads, he'd a-put it in the bible, now wouldn't he?"

Dr. Goy looked at the biscuits, turned the pan so they would brown more evenly, then said in a voice which though low was full of expression: "Richard, wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife—so long as you both shall live?"

"I will," replied Dick. There was earnestness, tenderness, and victory in the voice.

"When we were boys, Jack," boomed the colonel's full tones, "if a young man had obstacles to overcome, it only made him—"

"Margaret, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband—"

Overland Jack's acrid voice punctuated the sentence. "We made our mistake when we gave those railroad octopuses their first chance."

"In sickness and in health," continued Dr. Goy solemnly.

A low humming, muffled vibration could be heard far up the mountain road.

"Leave out the frills, Sun," said Dick. "Just give us the essentials. She's coming!"

"But we musn't forget the ring," interposed Daisy anxiously. "Don't leave that out."

"With this ring I thee wed—" com-

menced Dick, prompted by the minister.

There was a scrambling back of them which indicated that the colonel was getting to his feet. "Dick! Daisy!" he called, "there's Mother now!"

Dr. Goy set the prunes where they wouldn't burn.

"The couple will also stand up," he said. The Oriental, too, rose, and as he did so, he seemed to swell in stature and dignity, and his voice took on increased volume. "And now, according to the powers"—nearer and nearer came the motor car—"vested in me by the church and this state"—the approaching motor car rounded the projecting shoulder of rock, and the ground shook under its vibrations—"and in the presence of these witnesses—" The car came to a stop.

Spotlighted by four big electrics, with an overturned skillet of bacon at their feet, stood Dick and Daisy. Before them, on the opposite side of the camp fire, was the tall Chinaman, with one hand raised in an impressive gesture. With dignity and eloquence he intoned the concluding words of the ceremony. "I pronounce you man and wife."

"Daisy!" shrieked a voice from the car, "w-w-what are you doing?"

For one tremendous moment there was silence. Colonel Maxon looked at Overland Jack as though stunned. A grin, however, overspread the leathery face of the latter, outlining little wrinkles, until it resembled a well-tanned piece of alligator hide. "I'll be teetotally blessed," he said. "The darned cuss! And right before our eyes! Colonel, when you were a boy, did you ever beat that?" And he slapped his leg in unholy joy.

Mrs. Maxon, followed by a slender, athletic looking youth, was scrambling out of the car. Daisy ran toward them. "Mother!" she cried, "Dick and I have just been married! We'd have waited for you, only—" Her voice trailed off into inaudible murmurings.

Mrs. Maxon attempted to reply, tottered for a moment, and gracefully fainted in the arms of the young man. When she revived she found her daughter bending over her, with a group of embarrassed-looking men gazing interestedly from the background. "Daisy!" she moaned, "tell me I am dreaming. What ghastly joke is all this?"

"Why, Mother dear," replied the girl in bubbling honeyed tones, "it's not a joke. Dick will make me a beautiful husband. You know you like him."

"But—but what a way for my daughter to be married. What will the people back at home say? And, oh, Daisy, the m-m-m-minister! Why, he looks like a Ch-ch-ch-chinaman!" The mother's lips were blue and trembling.

"Mrs. Maxon," said Dick, "Dr. Goy is an Oxford don, a Ph. D., likewise a sort of cousin to the president of the Chinese republic, and can trace his ancestors through ninety-six generations."

Col. Maxon stood with his feet apart, surveying the group with an inscrutable countenance. His bushy grey brows met in a straight line, his jaw was squared, and the growls from his throat were as August thunder; but Overland Jack noticed that his hand lay very softly on his daughter's shoulder and was patting it tenderly.

The youth who had come in the automobile was vigorously shaking the bridegroom's hand. "So you're the Dick Reaves Miss Maxon used to talk so much about. Well, I'm mighty glad to see you. You see, she gave me the impression that you were fourteen feet tall, ate cactus for dinner, and kept mountain lions for office cats. I'll say this for you, you are certainly something for swiftness. Old man, I wish you all the good things there are in the world."

Dick grinned. "I'm not going to tell you what the lady said about you, but I can see that it is all so, and if there is

ever anything that I can do for you—"

"There certainly is," returned Stuyvesant Biddle promptly. "You see, you've got the finest girl on the face of the earth—bar just one—discovery made only three weeks ago. She's Dad's little secretary—a dream—just wait till you see her. Dad says he'll tie up the System before he'll let me tie up to her, but if I could get you to help me, and we could borrow your friend over there, the Reverend Tutti Frutti from Hari Kari, we'd have every engineer on the line chiming wedding bells within a week!"

They ate their wedding supper before the camp fire and with the aid of Stuyvesant Biddle, of Philadelphia, the occasion was far from a sad one. Even Mrs. Maxon forgot that she was a Lippincott, and ate yellow biscuits, ash-sprinkled bacon, and awful steak with almost as much gusto as her husband.

The bride and groom were to return with the Maxon party in the big car; and as Dick, Stuyvesant Biddle, and the colonel made their farewells to Overland Jack, each, in turn, slipped something crisp and crinkling into the old freighter's hand.

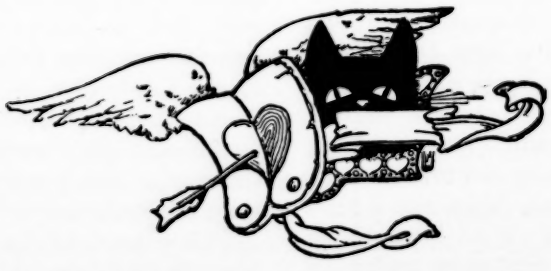
The three who remained gave the bridal party a good send-off. Overland Jack tied a mule shoe to the radiator, Dr. Goy sprinkled the bride and groom with a pound or so of best Chow King rice, and even the Mexican came out of the shadows and "viva'd" his native land and the departing guests with unprejudiced impartiality.

"Goy," said Hardinger after the car had gone, "you may not have noticed it but there has been a regular cloud-burst of filthy lucre around here lately. First, Dick passed me two twenties, one for you and the other for Manuel for looking after his horse; next, that dude from back East gave me fifty for his supper. Now that usually would be a plumb insult but it was his Dad that built this new railroad, and—well—you and I will split the bill and credit it up to the old man."

"Even one's enemy may be made to serve him," said Dr. Goy sententiously.

"But the worst of all," went on Hardinger with knit brows, "was the colonel. Darned if he didn't give me a hundred dollar bill and made me keep it. Said it was plumb necessary to relieve his mind. Now you wouldn't think after the way he got up on his hind legs—"

The Oriental waited, but as Jack seemed at a loss for words to complete his meaning, at last observed slowly: "My friend, it was the great Confucius who said: 'Words and even actions are symbols by which a wise man shall conceal his mind, but from the purse the heart speaketh!' "



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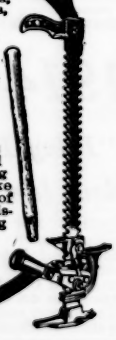

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